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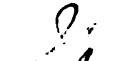

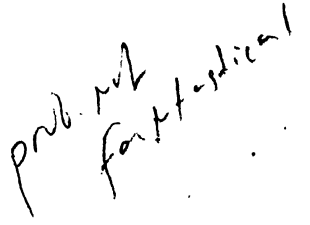
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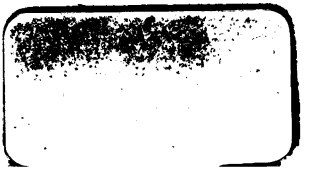

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The Threshold

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London

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CHAPTER I

THE railway train left London wrapped in a yellow fog, as if nature in the capital was fast asleep, lying in a dirty blanket. As it spun through the country, nature threw off the dirty blanket and turned and heaved in undulations and rolls of bleak and watery blues and greens. Further still, she rose, got out of bed and shook herself, Derbyshire way, into hills and clefts, ravines, gorges, and bowery woods of deeper, more varied greens, and warm, ruddy browns and greys. Further still, turning, dipping, and zigzaging amidst cuttings and clearings, offensive to her placid front and defiling to her beauty, nature in disgust apparently set to do her own housework, and covered her scored face with soot and grime. Faugh! the coal dust! It flew in at the carriage windows; it got into the occupants' eyes; it formed narrow lines of black along their lips and made them look dyspeptic. Further still, and after a twist and turn that threw the folks from side to side of the compartment, the black dust mixed itself with a dim yellow. The breeze wafted

into the open window a curious smell, as if the train were entering the infernal regions of primitive fancy or was crunching under its heavy wheels tons upon tons of Bryant and May's best and most pungent matches. The blackened herbage tangling down the cuttings and swarming across the neutral fields became here and there smudged and smeared with stripes and plots of dingy yellow, as if some uncouth hellish gorse had set itself upon the dirty grass. The sheep looking up at the passing familiar train with eyes bespectacled by black rings and wool that made them into very chimney-sweeps of mutton, cropped the gritty herbage far from those yellow patches, yet carried upon their smutty backs its touch even so. Further still, and nature set to cook, and one smelt heat and heard strange noises and saw nothing beautiful. Cinder hills and broken pots, mounds of refuse, stark innutrient plains, tons and piles of blue slime, mountains of mud pies, the potteries,—and the train stopped at a town on the confines of a northern county whose phonetic title in the mouths of its natives is Oton-o'-th'-Oits, but which figures in Murray as Halton-on-the-Heights.

The train only dropped one passenger at Halton and again whirled on, as if anxious to get rid of the heat and smell of burning clay, mixed with the back cast of those chemical works which spread that ugly, sulphurous, demoniac yellow splash over the coal-grimy land.

He was a young man—the passenger—and he looked about him on the platform as if anything but satisfied with his surroundings. Truly, he didn't seem to fit them. Tall, fair-haired, with a crisp curl in it; clean-featured, clean-shaven, blue-eyed, with lids that cut the eye across the pupil; broad-shouldered, well-shod, well-gloved, well-

hatted, clad in a travelling coat of some soft woolly material that looked warm and comfortable, dangling in front of its buttons a suspended eyeglass, which, if one looked at his clear strong eyes and thought a bit, ranged itself as superfluous and an evidence of pure dandyism. He was a good-looking young man, the sort that everybody takes to and talks to—the sort the women ruin if they can, and the men cultivate if he wills it. The porters of Oton-o'-th'-Oits followed the general example, and came about to offer him rough service and perhaps a trifle more respect than is usual. He turned about from one to the other and said to the man on his right—a ferocious man with red hair sticking out all over his face like the bristles of a pig:

"Is there a decent hotel in this place?"

The bristly man nodded.

"Oye! Thee tak th' Croon. 'Tis a toidy ploice. All th' swells go theer."

The passenger, evidently thinking himself one of the swells, put his Gladstone bag in the porter's hand.

"Give the direction to a cabman."

"It ben't fur," observed bristles, marching off.

"Hoo'll charge un a shellen', an' 'tis a step," said the other porter, calling it after the passenger in the slow provincial drawl.

The young man took no heed, but got into a cumbrous, antiquated growler that stood in the station yard. He threw a "shellen'" to the bristly porter, which caused his bristles to crinkle up into his eyes with the sudden gathering upward of his face, and bade the cabman drive to the Crown.

"What a God-forsaken hole!" was his comment as he looked out of the smudgy cab window. It was not

inviting. A damp drizzle pervaded the air. A clammy vapour dulled objects with a smeary sweat. The streets were dirty, grimy, coaly, and ill-kept. There was no county council. Apparently the responsibility of the urban municipality was a sinecure. Garbage floated upon gutter lakes and watercourses. Miry scraps of newspaper enfolded themselves with decayed cabbage leaves and potato parings into a damp, sodden drift, and came to anchor against the shops and houses, and choked the entries to unsavoury, narrow, ill-paved alleys. Gloom and "blacks" were everywhere. "It's worse than London!" muttered the passenger. And so it was; for, in spite of the hail of printing ink which is so often spattered about it, London is the best-kept congregation of atoms in England. That's not saying much for it, the carpist will sneer. Perhaps not, but it is so.

The Crown Hotel looked as if in its inception and early growth it had had ambitions. A flight of steps, an overpowering, top-heavy portico, ground floor windows which from their length, breadth, and pane-dimensions made the upstairs windows look like fan-lights: these things intimated that the Crown Hotel aspired at one time to *be* an hotel; but, like a man of exalted ideas who is dragged to earth by his sordid mean relations, it had failed through bad associations; and the appearance at its side of a long, low, dirty lean-to, which demonstrated, by means of gilt letters on the damp windows, that in its divisions it supplied a jug and bottle department and a saloon bar, together with a weak-kneed, toppling look about the whole two-storied structure, as if its original intention of five or six floors at least had been reduced to two through rickets, made the Crown Hotel an object of dubious comment on the part of a newcomer. It

didn't look particularly clean. But then nothing looked clean in Halton. The stranger's expression betokened the keenest disgust. All his points, his white, well-shaped hands, with their long fingers, their rounded, deep, and well-kept nails, his spotless linen, his polished boots, a certain odour of wood-violets which shuddered on the coal-gritty air when he flourished his handkerchief: all these showed the man of nice perceptions—in short, the bit of a dandy.

The landlord of the Crown was a fat-faced, slow, unwieldy man who had stood still with the house, and, too, was weak-kneed and stunted. He appeared on the top of the ambitious flight of steps.

"Can I have a bed here to-night—and perhaps for the week?" inquired the traveller in a tone which suggested that, if he could find a place more to his taste in Halton, he would shift his quarters.

The landlord nodded, slowly, ponderously, and, turning his heel, rolled over the stone pavement.

A chambermaid appeared: a girl with a grey complexion and dusty hair.

"There's not a decent-looking woman in the place!" muttered the traveller, as he followed her upstairs and viewed with sour disfavour the neglected and faded accommodation of his bedroom.

The Crown Hotel might have been the Tower of Silence. Nobody spoke in it more than was necessary for the barest and sparsest communication. The stranger expressed himself in soliloquy as not sorry for this, for the uncouth dialect of the place oppressed him like the rest of it.

His dinner was not badly cooked, albeit a trifle greasy. In fact, there was a strong likeness, to the traveller's

mind, between Halton-on-the-Heights and some German towns of consequence which had come within his scheme of journeying.

After dinner he sent for the fat landlord.

"Do you happen to know the name of Horndyke"—he glanced at his pocket-book through the eyeglass and explicitly read—"Thomas Anthony Horndyke?"

A flutter of something volcanic swept the landlord's face before it fixed into speech. Perhaps it was a smile.

"Ay, sir," he said. "'Tis Mr Horndyke, the Longworthy manager."

"That is so. Can you tell me where to find him?"

"At the Longworthy pits, sure-ly."

"And they are——?"

"Down the main street—up the Scotland Road—through Angel Fields—the worst place in Halton—across the Bridge and over the Waste to the pits. You'll find it easily, sir, by asking."

He seemed to think he had said enough. The traveller thought he had, and, dismissing him, started off to find Thomas Anthony Horndyke.

CHAPTER II

OUT in the street the traveller stopped to look for a vehicle. Lumbering coal waggons grinding down from the collieries on the heights of Halton, trollies filled with the blue mud he had noticed in the train, vans piled with mountains of mangold wurzels, flat-bottomed carts overflowing with wreckage of all sorts—from old iron filings to mothery bricks, slate shards, and stony shale. No cabs seemed to ply in this labouring centre; no conveyances save hand-barrows apparently had any objective on its crooked, uphill streets but its two industries—the collieries and the potteries. The traveller strolled along the main street, looking about him in disgust, and repeating his original remark concerning Halton.

"What a God-forsaken hole! The German peasants are bad—very bad, but they are the fine soil of the earth compared to these people."

He stood still again and stroked his chin. While he was stroking his chin one might have noticed a peculiarity in his white flexile hand—fine-boned and supple—the fingers sharpened to their tips where the cushions flattened into depressions against the rounded, clean-rasped nails; a curious opening and shutting of the first finger and thumb as he smoothed his face, as if he were measuring his own jaw with a pair of compasses; a

flexible thumb curve in his way of adjusting his glass, as if he were in the habit of balancing his thoughts by test and reducing them instrumentally to paper.

The inhabitants of Halton were no more attractive than their town. Hats or bonnets among the women were eschewed. The hair of many of them was dirty and coarse, and the traveller wondered why so much of the bluish clay stuck to it. Did they sleep in beds of clay? Some of them had twisted pieces of rag or calico round their heads, and none of them wore cloaks or jackets. The little plaid cross-over shawl, scarcely reaching to the bare, bony, brown elbows, seemed to be the constitutional covering; short petticoats—a little below the knee; what used to be called in the days of our youth Garibaldi bodices—not to be confounded with the modern blouse—many of them extremely short of buttons; white or grey worsted stockings, much bespattered with the blue clay, and clogs. Their faces were cadaverous and pale, girls in their teens wearing the aspect and wrinkles of middle-aged women; middle-aged women bowed and shrivelled like their grandmothers; little children, puny and ill-fed, slung along on the shoulders of these women-labourers like the young of the aborigines, without their plumpness; bigger children, gaunt, wizened, and poorer fed, scrambling at the women's scanty skirts. The traveller repeated his second remark against Halton:

"Its worse than London!"

And again it was. For the metropolitan detritus of humanity is largely the scum and sediment of sloth and greed. Its cry is the business-like yell of the professional beggar, those howling dervishes who attract and skin the pocket of the pious charity-monger who

sees and hears, but has neither eyes nor brains in his or her beneficence. Above the gloomy streets of Halton, looking in their distance something like huge spider's webs sprawling upon the row of rugged hills that gave the place its name, reared two or three black, clumsily-revolving objects—objects which, by the glances he cast at them, formed the goal of the traveller's present desire. These were the giants who ground the folks of Halton upon their iron teeth. These black wheels, with their slowly turning spikes and prongs, were the wheels upon which these creatures of clay were broken into things of toil only, into mindless, soulless, futureless, objectless moving stacks of shale and mud, like the scavengers carts carried down the dirty street. They were humanity upon whom the monster of mechanical engineering had set its pulverising foot. It had stamped out of them all shape or likeness to man and woman, and in its despotism had converted them into feeders to itself, as important and as easily replaced as a pennyworth of tin-tacks or a roll or two of copper wire.

The traveller did not regard it in this light. How could he, with those compass fingers and that pliant thumb? He thought the place an abominable hole and the people objectionable: the men with their stolid, stupefied faces, gaunt, cadaverous, either coal dusty or unhealthily pale, their foul corduroys tied up with rope into a sort of knickerbocker, festooned over the cumbrous, noisy clog, and smeared fustian coats and ragged, collarless shirts of coarse jean. Some of the men were strange sights, and the traveller was at a loss to account for the curious pallid complexion, the white sparse hair, patchy and towzled, the toothless cavern of a mouth, and the stoop of age in comparatively young men, until

he remembered the yellow cast over the land, and the phosphorus and sulphur works not many miles away. Strolling along once more, and with his glass taking in these things, he came to the conclusion that Halton, though a thriving town, was a place singularly lacking in interest and amusement. There was no theatre, no concert hall, no picture gallery, no institute for imparting either learning or relaxative from those grinding wheels on the hills. There was a little town hall, of portentous and consumptive body like the Crown Hotel. There were hosts of public houses, all with skittle alleys and free-and-easies attached—dirty, malodorous cellars. There was a fair-sized conventicle—for the greater part of the Haltonians were Methodist—and there was a wooden shed, still displaying a tattered announcement anent its occupancy and usage as a Salvation Army centre. But the Haltonians had pelted the poor Salvationists out of their town and shut up the wooden shed, and the placard drooped in flabby strips of disappointed endeavour. Nobody who could help it resided in the town, and far away over the hills on which it stood, away from those grinding, turning giants, away from its coaly, muddy tracks, the landscape was dotted with numbers of little, well-kept, prim houses, the habitations of those of its industrials who could afford such residences. In the town were rows upon rows of tiny tenements, uniform and ugly, all with small bayed windows hung upon rickety laths, all with narrow deal doors guiltless of polish, and all with bright yellow brick steps leading down into the house place or central kitchen which serves for a family dwelling.

The traveller stopped again in the middle of the main street at a gateway belonging to one of the many

taverns. He did this because he saw, lounging against the gate-post, a nondescript animal in a top coat and dim woollen comforter with a metal plate resting upon it.

"Are you a cabman?" snapped the traveller, impatient with Halton-on-the-Heights and everybody in it.

"Oye," replied the nondescript after a pause, and staring straight ahead.

"Where's your cab?"

After a longer pause the nondescript replied again to the horizon:

"Un t'yeard."

"Get it out and take me up to the Longworthy Pits." The traveller threw the order at him, like a man accustomed to give orders, and with a movement like a stamp of his foot.

The nondescript slowly brought the pair of dull, withered gooseberries in his head to bear upon this commander in an eyeglass. He stared at him with a fixity which he had before expended on the prospect, and finally spoke *ex cathedra*.

"Oi'll nobbut tak 'ee to t'pit. Oi'll tak 'ee to Shadden Dippen. 'Tis fur as theer's track fur."

"Where's the place?"

"What ploice?"

"Shad—Shad—oh! the brutal hole with the brutal name?"

"Shadden Dippen? 'Tis foot o' t'hill — where Longwort' pit lays. T'pit lays t'oother soide o' Doggert Moss."

"Well! take me to the nearest point, and for goodness' sake—move."

By dint of such urging a ramshackle cab, much in

need of repair, and a trifle more rickety than the conveyance which had brought him from the station, was fetched out of the inn yard and attached to a melancholy equine specimen, who seemed to be pondering on the time when he should be reduced to cat's meat and to be depressed by the ethical problem involved in such disposition.

Oh, those stones! An Indian gharry was a C-sprung victoria with all the latest improvements to the pitching and jolting of that beastly north country growler. And the lumpy admonishments of the indescribable driver to his afflicted steed got on the traveller's nerves, naturally susceptible and circumstantially irritated. When a glimpse from the dirty cab window showed him that the road forked before them and that the one of the forks which brought those colossal wheels nearer was paved with slate spar and loosely thrown flint splinters, he stopped the cab and alighted.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"'Ere be Scotland Road," replied the nondescript, after his usual pause. "Yon!"—pointing with his whip to the shaley road —"did used to be Tebbutt's houlding, but now they've choinged t'name to Moolynew Road. 'T leads past Longwort' to t'Mollynew Pits t'oother soide t'moss. Theer's Shadden Dippen afore 'ee, and Doggert Moss 'tween 'ee and Longwort'."

"Whose is the white house I can see in the hollow?"

"'Tis Muster Horndyke's—t'overseer."

"Ha, that'll do. I'll dispense with the rest of the Scotland Road and take the short cut over Molyneux Road."

He was a free-handed young man, and the fare he gave his stolid jehu fully compensated for what lack of

courtesy he may have displayed. They separated in goodwill, and the traveller, after surveying the surrounding country through his glass, tucked his monocle into the breast of his coat and struck down the Molyneux Road, without looking back at the sorrowful horse revolving on his slow backward progress that cat's-meat question.

CHAPTER III

DOWN the sides of Shadden Dippen, after the carted flints of the Molyneux Road, the traveller found his way through soft clay and sand and mud which had been delved into deep ruts and chasms by the constantly passing waggons. Shadden Dippen depressed itself into the earth as if Dame Nature, quarrelsome one day at meal time, had taken a monster tablespoon, and, slapping it on her earthen table, had dented it. The traveller found it best and cleanest to keep his tracks within the cart ruts. Albeit, when he climbed out of the dip on to Doggert Moss—a heathy, sandy common—he regarded the condition of his boots and trousers with no lessening of his previous irritation and a touch of outraged vanity. That is advisedly said, for the traveller, without being an exquisite, was nice upon points of habiliment, cleanliness, and general effect. The white house so near to the turning wheels was a little two-storied building, with a dull, drab door and an iron knocker. The traveller gave quite a tarantara on this knocker, for his way had been by no means smooth nor his path straight, and his temper was rucky as a consequence, as men's tempers mostly are in such event, even with saints and heroes. It's only that they don't show it; and that man is most to be trusted who vents his spleen on a knocker and

snaps at the person who opens the door, much as the traveller did.

He glared through his eyeglass at the man who held the handle.

"Mr Horndyke?—Thomas Anthony Horndyke?"

"I am Thomas Anthony Horndyke. At your service."

"That's all right. Through much tribulation, etc." The traveller stepped down on to the brick floor. "Perhaps that's a thought profane. But I've had a certain amount of trouble in this gruesome corner of a place, which must have been the last impression of the Deific finger on the face of the earth. My name is Arethune—Adam Arethune."

Like all else in Halton, the manner and speech of Thomas Anthony Horndyke were slow, deliberate, and delivered after a contemplative pause. He looked the traveller up and down and apparently decided in his mind that it was worth while to be civil. He grasped his hand in a single painful grip and placed a chair by a big table which occupied the middle of his queer little red-bricked office.

"You have paid us a surprise visit after all, Mr Arethune."

"Yes. Up to the last moment my brother had a mind to come himself. *At* the last moment he changed it—and—here am I. I don't envy you your quarters, Mr Horndyke. A drearier place than Halton-on-the-Heights I should think it would be impossible to imagine."

"You have only just arrived, sir?"

"Within the hour."

"Then you have not seen it under good auspices. It is Friday too. To-morrow is pay, and a half day. Not that it makes much difference to the place, but the

people have a sort of fair on the heath yonder, which lies between Halton and the Cluny Cut collieries. The collieries are a good seven miles off, but we lie in a hollow, you see, and we get all their dirt and smoke, beside our own furnace smoke outside here. On Sunday you'll see the folks turn out in all their glory to go to chapel. Oh, they're rarely religious, I tell you. It's the only fun they've got. They're a thrifty, hard-working folk, with primitive tastes and no crazes. They take their life as they get it—without salt."

While Thomas Anthony Horndyke was slowly grinding out this extenuatory explanation anent the ways of Halton, Mr Arethune was taking close stock of him through his glass, and a prim, sour expression of disapproval gradually crept out of the unpuckered eye, downwards towards the lines about his mouth. The disapproval was not of what Mr Horndyke was saying. Mr Arethune didn't care whether Halton dressed itself on Sundays or went naked and unadorned, and its thrift and industry were inconsequent. But, being in the habit of steadily staring everybody out of countenance himself, he had a great objection to having any sort of verbal matter thrown at him, as it were, by a series of tardily enunciated side-shots, to the accompaniment of downcast eyes which pointed the side-shots with stealthy, furtive glances at the sparse furniture, at the brick floor—anywhere but at his face.

Thomas Anthony Horndyke was not so tall as his visitor, but he was not a short man, although his breadth and squareness of shoulder did injustice to his height. He was not a sandy-complexioned man, though one thought so until one looked at him, and came to the conclusion that his reddish eye-lashes and long-haired

brows, peaked in the middle, were as anomalous to his dark chestnut hair as were the freckles which studded his face, to the skin beneath. Adam Arethune tried to fathom the colour of his eyes, with that acrid look of discontent at finding no more congeniality in the overseer than in the rest of Halton, but he failed, and the optics of Thomas Anthony Horndyke forthwith became objects of interest to Mr Arethune, who held the opinion that, in close converse with one's kind, the eyes are illuminative.

"You have been here long?" It was both query and comment, and was jerked out of the nod in which the eyeglass dropped and struck against the buttons of Mr Arethune's waistcoat.

"Six months."

"Ah, I thought so. You've learnt some of the bear's tricks. How does the new gearing work?"

"Well, the block chain doesn't stretch, and the tiger-toothed cog picks much cleaner."

"Humph! I suppose I'm lucky to have caught you here without having to go further to find you."

"Oh, I'm usually here on Friday afternoon. I make up my accounts."

He touched the open books upon the table, which, to be sure, explained themselves, and shut them.

"Shall we go to the pits?"

"If you please."

Mr Arethune rose and somebody tapped at the door, which Thomas Anthony Horndyke opened as before.

Outside a woman stood, and for the first time Mr Arethune observed a quickening in the overseer's speech.

"What! again, Mary Ivory! You've been trotting to and fro all day."

"You must blame Mr Gathergold for that—not me," replied the woman, looking over his head at Adam Arethune, and with a smile which made a streak of light to flash and fade in her dirty, clay-splashed face.

Standing up there, she looked down upon both men, and Arethune thought he had never seen such an object. She must have been barely an inch short of six feet high, and with the additional height that the raised step gave her she towered above the overseer. What like hair she possessed he could not tell. She might have been bald, for a faded, soiled, and mud-stained cloth of some murky neutral colour enveloped her head more completely than the folds of a turban and permitted not one hair to be seen. Her eyes were smeared round with the bluish clay, as if her miry hands had well rubbed them. The flecks of clay upon her face destroyed its contour as effectually as a good make-up, and the grime upon her skin disguised its natural colour into a deathly pallor, especially one great smudge straight across the nose, breaking it as completely as a blow, implanting the haunting memory of this ghastly vision upon the retentive mind of the young engineer. One only thing struck him favourably. No mud defiled her smile, and her teeth carried her name in her face when she laughed.

"You've done precious little work to-day, Mary Ivory," said Horndyke good-naturedly, taking from her the note she had brought.

"It isn't my fault, sir. I told you that before. Mr Gathergold sends me. I've never shirked the pugging, although I do hate it."

Another thing struck Arethune: the woman's speech. There was hardly a trace of provincialism in it. She spoke with a more refined accent than Horndyke. Why

was she such a vision? and what was the "pugging" that could make her so?

Meanwhile the overseer screwed up the note she had brought him and flung it into the fender.

"All right, Mary Ivory," he said, without looking at her. "I'll be up there directly. Do you go ahead and tell Gathergold so—if you'll be so good."

Arethune stared rather at this addendum to the order. He remarked again that Thomas Anthony Horndyke spoke to this dirty-faced woman with less deliberation than before she came, and that he never looked at her dirty face once. Another thing astonished Arethune. Upon receipt of Horndyke's mandate, Mary Ivory swept him a mock curtsey up there on the step that would not have disgraced a duchess at a drawing-room, and, with another flash of a smile, turned with a little movement of her body suggesting an unimagined grace hidden by the ugly, loose sackcloth bag in which it was enshrouded. He was glad somehow that she smiled as she went away. It left behind the impression of her teeth—the only pleasant thing he could see about her from the brick floor. He pushed past the overseer and mounted on to the common to watch her as she went away, and she left behind another advantage as she skimmed over the heathery ground.

Her feet and legs were bare, and dirtier than her face, caked and cloaked in clay and sand. But they were a good shape, the ankles fine and tapering, the sweep of her legs and her body, as her flying speed caught and swung out the old calico gown underneath the sackcloth, curving and dipping in nature's perfect rhythm of motion. There was a movement about the woman peculiarly undulating, suggesting a quite grotesque elegance when

correlated in the thinker's mind with her frightful garb and occupation.

"Is that a woman or a girl?—a nightmare?—a fiend?—or a scarecrow?" he turned back and demanded of Horndyke.

Thomas Anthony answered a trifle sulkily.

"Neither. She's eighteen years of age, so she's not a woman; yet she's left girlhood behind. She may be, for aught I know, a dream of the possible, and she's no fiend or scarecrow, but just a pug-girl. If you'll be so good as to come down to the pits, you'll see them at work."

"A dream of the possible for aught I know!" What a thing to say of that long-legged, horrific contradiction! Adam Arethune stared again at the overseer, and they walked over the sandy common in a silence that was filled in the minds of both men by Mary Ivory, the pug-girl, who could curtsey like a duchess and who could talk, in this dreadful place of a Halton, like a civilised being.

CHAPTER IV

DURING the walk across Doggert Moss, Adam Arethune vainly tried to fix and define the eyes of Thomas Anthony Horndyke. The overseer persistently kept them on the ground, and, when his companion spoke to him, slurred a look across the lower buttons of Arethune's waistcoat, which, landing among the heath on the other side, wandered back into the earth perspective in a straight line with Mr Horndyke's heavily-shod feet.

It was a trivial thing, but, like that other trivial thing —the wilful and superficial ugliness of Mary Ivory—it irritated and tormented Mr Arethune. Why could not Thomas Anthony look him in the face? Why did Mary Ivory make such a fright of herself? Was it shyness on his part? Stuff and nonsense! What right has the overseer of a pottery works to shyness? Was it exigency on her part? Good gracious! what right has an industry to impose in its manipulation such an exigency on a woman as the necessity of turning herself into a dream of the infernal regions? There! Halton-on-the-Heights in its compendium seemed infernal to Adam Arethune. Why shouldn't Mary Ivory pose as Hecate in such a witch-ridden hole? She'd be complete with a broomstick. These little things worried Adam

The Threshold

Arethune, as little things worry complex minds in youth. Yet he laughed at the fantasy, and the crooked, waist-button glance skimmed him again as he raised his head and found himself close to those great revolving wheels and within sight of the big kiln yards and shops which shadowed and employed Halton. The noise of the wheels proclaimed their vicinity to a far radius, and these ingenious constructions, which had superseded and dispensed with the heavy manual labour in brick and pottery making, struck one with admiration of the brain skill that had made it possible, by means of these iron monsters, to turn out material for an England of sky-scraping buildings in so little time and with so little labour compared with the heavy work of older and hand-wrought days, when the rearing of a cottage meant slow and onerous toil. Yet these great machines—with their beams to span Regent Street; cranks and levers that might have been the metallised limbs of a Titan; cogs to weigh tons upon tons; great teeth—the tiger teeth of the overseer's comment—to crunch and smash the rocks and flints to porridge for the digestion of an iron vat of a stomach that might well have been the baby model for the colossal spoon with which nature dented Shadden Dippen—these contraptions of wonder —these miracles in mechanics had their disadvantages. They brought big surroundings like themselves. They brought smoke and fire in their wake. They crunched up all gaiety and beauty on those great cruel teeth. They shackled and wound up Halton in their block chains until its sympathies and prettinesses were forged in their links. They turned the high priests and acolytes of the round temple of tile manufacture—a building as large as a metropolitan concert room—into red

Indians, half naked and pouring with sweat and grime. They shook hands—these monsters—with those other monsters over at the Cluny Cut collieries, and compacted to spread a layer of darkness and desolation over the land, and to make engines and mere machines like themselves of all the men and women who came under their tyrannical rule.

The pug-girls were now the only women employed in the potteries, and there were more than twenty of them: clay-carriers, to load themselves like young donkeys with the porridge belched out of the iron vat, and to bear the load on head and breast forty times a day, to the bench of the moulders.

This was Mary Ivory's occupation, and Arethune saw her among a crowd of like guys trotting to her destination, scooping up the soft sand with her bare feet in the clumsy walk which staggered beneath a weight of clay high on her head and hugging a like amount to her chest. He watched her as she went; watched her as she dumped the earthern pudding down on to the moulder's pasteboard and straightened up like an elastic young willow, freed from the sweeping, crookening gale.

He watched her as she nodded and laughed at the moulder, who apparently gave her some coarse chaff, and even there at that distance he saw, and somehow felt glad of, the quick gleam of her smile.

He watched her gliding stride as she swept back to her place before the mud heaps. He watched her as she took the two wooden handles at the end of a long curved piece of wire and struck at the pile of blue clay before her. The lump thus sliced off must have weighed half a hundredweight, and Mary Ivory, with a dexterous

duck, poised it on the top of the dirty rag which covered her hair so completely. Stooping again in thus hampered stiffness, she struck again at the clay, and cut another chunk as big as the first, which, with another duck, she managed, by knack of usage, to tilt atop of the one already weighing her down. Yet more, so laden; she caught at the rest of the clay on the bench, and, hugging it in her arms, another half hundredweight, she staggered off to the moulders, bending and swaying beneath a burden which a coal heaver or a dock labourer would have shirked and refused with bad language.

Arethune watched her through this performance; then, dropping his glass, turned to find the overseer looking at him straight. Thomas Anthony's eyes were small, almost hidden under their brow projection, of a light greenish grey, and rather wide apart. Adam Arethune grunted his negative satisfaction at having at last made this discovery, and proceeded to express his dissatisfaction at the sight he had just seen, including in his remarks a red-faced man who stood with Mr Horndyke, and whom, by his dress and bearing, the young engineer rightly took to be Gathergold—the foreman.

"How often does that girl make that journey?" he inquired of Horndyke.

"Which of them, sir? There are a score and more."

The red-faced man laughed.

"Mr Arethune means the long un, oi'll lay. Folk dunnot look at t'rest when Polly Ivory's aboot."

"Well, I did mean her, it's true—because I've seen her before—but the rest also?"

The red-faced man glanced at the overseer and answered for him.

"Hur's th' best o' th' brood, it's true. Hur's gotten th' power o' a young steam crane. Whoy! oi've kent Polly Ivory to carry foive ton o' clay 'twixt breakfast an' tea, sur."

"Five tons of clay! Why, if I or you were to ask a bargeman or a porter or any other burden-bearing animal to carry five tons between breakfast and tea, what do you think he'd say to you?"

"Oi dunno, sur. T'chaps ower theer wean't do't. So, t'weemen do't. Ye see, 'tis no wark loike and t'chaps loike summat t' do. They be mo'ders or pug-rakers or pit hands and what not, but clay carryin's weemen's wark."

"Women's work! Most of these are little more than children."

"Oye, sur, they be no one o' them under sixteen."

"Sixteen! to be carrying five tons of clay a day!—which t'chaps won't do! How do you pay them?"

"'Tis piece wark, sur, but—but—oh, they do weel eno'. They gits two shellen' a day—twal' shellen' a week. 'Tis good pay fur a gurl."

"Very," said Arethune drily, looking for the overseer. But he was strolling away in the direction of what looked like a heap of huge, rather over-exposed sausages of doubtful antiquity: drain pipes in their primitive formation. And Arethune presently heard his voice raised in protest against their situation—fraught with danger to their cylindrical symmetry.

The foreman lowered his tone.

"Ye needn't be troobled aboot Polly Ivory, sur." He jerked his head in Horndyke's direction. "'E won't let

hur do too much. 'E thinks it'll spoil hur figger. Hur taks moor messages and such loike 'twixt this and his ploice below than hur doos pugging."

A female voice broke in.

"Oi woodn' say too much aboot yon, if oi were 'ee, Billee. 'Tis a ticklish soobjack."

"What now, wench! not gone. No, no, thee'rt waitin' aboot fur th' Ivory gurl 'ersell, but oi'll thank 'ee to be off. Hur's doon precious leettle to-day wi' Horndyke's nonsense. An' hur's best pug-girl o' 'em all. See thur! hur's doon in that load an's back to t'bench quick as loightnin'! Oh, hur works well, doos Polly Ivory, when 'e'll let hur an' thou ben't aboot."

Arethune took the "wench" for a young woman of five or six and twenty. She was really only just twenty, but the occupation of Halton had an ageing effect on women and girls. She was short and square-shouldered, dark-haired, dark-eyed, pale-faced, with its skin strongly pitted by smallpox. She wore a calico gown, unbleached knitted stockings, clogs, the regulation "Garibaldi" bodice, the small cross-over shawl, and no covering on her head. In her hand she carried by its handle a tin can, with a basin thrust in the top, covered by a saucer tied over in a handkerchief. This had been the table furniture and napery of the foreman's dinner.

Arethune turned to her with the smile that people assume on such occasions—a trifle sour, perhaps, on this.

"Is it like that?"

The young woman threw back her head and opened a large mouth full of big teeth in a laugh.

"'Twould be if hur would, sur. But, Lord love ye! hur cannot thole un."

Gathergold shook his head warningly.

"Go easy, Kezie. 'Tis thou shouldna clack noo."

"Ah, but oi'm not pit foreman, and Muster Horndyke cannot give me t'shove. 'Tis true, Billee, Polly Ivory cannot thole th' sight o' un fur all 'e's overseer and hur's naught but a pug-girl."

Arethune turned the focus of his glass upon the square figure of the overseer as a unique specimen in eccentricity.

"Isn't it rather unusual for a man in Horndyke's position to get in those relations with—a—a—pug-girl?" he asked Gathergold.

The foreman laughed again.

"'Twould be, sur, wi' another, it's loike. But Polly Ivory ben't quite the general sort o' pug-girl. Afore hur feyther got knackered Polly Ivory wor a deal too good for sister Keziah here."

"Hur never thowt so, Billee. 'Twas on'y that hur went to t'night school, and talked summat loike t'gentleman. An' that wor more Emmett than t'night school."

Keziah nodded to t'gentleman.

"What happened to her father?"

"Well, sur, he wor in a moighty good job up Owdham way in t'chemical works. 'E took three pun ten a week, 'e did. But, Lord bless ye, owd mon Ivory luved brass too well fur hissel'. 'E got warnin's eno'. 'E's teeth fell out one by one, an' still 'e stayed. E's hair cum out, an' still 'e stayed, till at last th' copper pulled ower him, an' thur 'e lays down yonder wi' a poll 's white as your shirt cuff, an' no gud in's boddy at all."

"What a terrible thing!" remarked Arethune, drop-

ping his glass and calling to mind the cadaverous creatures he had seen in the streets of Halton.

"'Tis t'copper doos it, sur. 'Tis owd Nick to a mon. They gi' gud wages, but t'pay ben't worth it. 'Ere's Muster Horndyke cummin' back. Keziah Gathergold, thou'lt cop it if 'e sees thee. Be off home!"

CHAPTER V

"WHAT did you say the man's name was?"

"I don't rightly know, sir. He's a bit of a mystery. The people here call him, and he calls himself, Emmett."

"Is he a schoolmaster?"

Mr Arethune held a marvellously painted tile in his hand—a tile covered with arabesques never seen designed on English clay.

"A schoolmaster!" repeated Horndyke. "Not that I know of. I couldn't tell you what he has been. I'm sure he isn't an Englishman; but he's very close. He's more than a match for Halton." The overseer laughed. "Why do you ask if he's a schoolmaster?"

Adam Arethune hesitated, laid down the tile and picked up another as beautiful.

"I—don't—quite know. I think I heard somebody mention the name of Emmett in connection with scholastic pursuits. In fact, it associates itself in my mind with Halton night school. I don't know why."

He did know why, but he wanted to draw the overseer, who, since the conversation with the Gathergolds, had become rather interesting.

"Night school! No, sir. I never heard he had anything to do with the night school."

"No, to be sure—I remember now. (I tell you what it is, Horndyke, this chap has been in Turkey. You see

these patterns and colourings in the mosques sometimes, and not very often there. They say there's nobody to do them or to get the colours)."

He stopped. Mr Horndyke didn't care whether the beautiful arabesques on the tiles came from Turkey or Timbuctoo. He jogged Mr Arethune unceremoniously.

"The night school, sir?"

Mr Arethune squinted at the tile in his hand one-sidedly, catching the light on it.

"There's a strong dash of Byzantine art about this. That precision of detail is most unnatural and very Greek. I've seen it too in the Mogul traceries about Delhi. The night school? What about the night school? Are you going there? Pity the population of Halton doesn't. It might at least learn to talk plain English. Oh, I know where I heard about the night school. It was somebody said that girl—Alabaster—no, not Alabaster—though I've come across that as a surname too—Ivory—Sarah Ivory——"

"Mary Ivory," corrected the overseer.

"Oh yes—Mary Ivory—went to school, and was taught by a man named Emmett."

"She wasn't taught at the night school," said Thomas Anthony, with a sudden and unaccountable catch in his voice—a sudden and unaccountable flush in his face—a sudden and unaccountable aggression of manner. "Emmett lodges with them—and—and—he pulls her up when he hears her talking in the ways of the folks hereabout, that's all. He'd as lief let her be—for she's no affair of his, nor her tongue neither. If Sir James gives him a job in the works he'll not regret it, acting on your recommendation, sir."

Adam Arethune rose and laid down the tile.

"I shouldn't think of recommending a man to my brother without seeing him. If you'll tell me where to find the house, I'll take him in the rough now."

Thomas Anthony Horndyke reached for his hat.

"I'll go with you, sir. 'Tis a step the other side the Dippen."

Arethune slurred a quizzical glance at the sullen, moody face of the overseer. It was not entirely the foreigner's skill in clay painting which attracted Arethune so alertly. Thomas Anthony and that long, dirty-faced pug-girl were becoming quite exciting, and anything that promised even a transient interest in life was welcome to Adam Arethune.

Fancy finding a romance in Halton-on-the-Heights! —a romance of which the heroine was a human wheelbarrow or hand-cart for the transfer of mud; the hero a pit overseer; and the other man a pottery printer and a mystery.

Squalid, sordid, common—yes, very common. Mr Arethune turned the quizzical glance in on his own soul. What a reduction! to have to depend for one's amusement and interest in the play of life upon such undignified *dramatis personæ*. Fancy being driven by circumstance to a place so circumscribed and limited in its psychic possibilities as to leave the doctrine of life to be demonstrated by a pug-girl and a Thomas Anthony Horndyke! Could such people feel? Could such people love? Or was it only a blunted, stunted sexual appetite that they shared in common with other lower animals? With his glass in his eye, and a fastidious disgust of the mud tracks of Shadden Dippen, Mr Arethune revolved these sociological problems in his mind as he followed Mr Horndyke.

The Threshold

There was a little, low, two-storied house, toppling unsteadily on the brow of the scoop—a little house, fenced in by three bare elderly trees on its most windy side, and breaking out into brown blotches where its original plaster had dropped from its bricks on the side nearest the Dippen—a little house whose crazy little windows let in light, but distorted everything seen through them by blobs and warps in their thick, coarse glass—a little door retiring behind a tottery wooden porch, which presented a bright green archway to the visitor coming up the weed-grown, narrow, pebbly path.

This newly-painted porch offended Thoman Anthony. He remarked sourly:

"'Tis a pity he can't find enough to occupy his time without covering the house with his paint muck."

Arethune smiled:

"What are you objecting to?"

Horndyke jerked his head in the cottage's direction.

"Oh, nothing particular, sir: only Emmett's so fond of daubing."

He lifted the latch and invited Adam to enter the small, flagged house-place. It was neat and orderly. A large rag rug covered the greater part of the flags. A cinder fire burnt in a tiny grate on a well-swept, whitened hearth. A muslin curtain, cleaner than most of the Halton curtains, shaded the window, and some pots of geranium stood before the curtain. An old man sat in a wooden chair stuffed with calico cushions by the fire, and Arethune felt a strange dismay, and remembered that "th' copper had got hould o' un" as he looked at his ashen face and hands lined and barred with wrinkles, his thin, white patches of hair, like the hair clinging to a [illegible] the toothless gums, and the light-lustreless eyes.

"What a fearful object!" muttered Arethune to himself.

Mr Horndyke nodded familiarly to the old man.

"Good day to you, Mr Ivory. I've brought our engineer up to see Emmett. Is he hereabout?"

"Oh ay, Muster Horndyke. Emmett's above—Emmett's above."

He took no notice of them, but kept shaking his head at the fire, and repeating that Emmett was above until they reached the foot of a winding wooden stair, leading to the upper story, when he changed his information to a complaint that "'twas fower o'clock, an' th' gurl not cum home and he wanted his tea."

Mr Horndyke remarked in a low growl as he climbed the steps:

"If I ever have anything to do with you, old man Ivory, you go into the House pretty quick, I tell you. Useless old men have no call to be hanging round eating their heads off on other folk's wages."

And Adam Arethune, who caught the back cast of these mutterings, could well imagine that the poor "knackered" old chemical worker would get small mercy at the overseer's hands if he had the disposal of him.

"You think the workhouse a good institution?" he said, as they stood on the bit of landing outside a lath door at the top of the stairs.

"For such-like folk: yes, sir. I ask no better myself than to be shoved into the workhouse when I get old and burdensome. What does it matter where one drags out the end of a useless life? And the poor rates are high enough, Lord knows!"

Thomas Anthony had a way of squaring his jaw on the expression of an opinion, as if, having formed it, it

was so in the teeth of the hearer and the world. He squared his jaw now, while that furtive eye-glance lurked round Arethune's feet.

"Hum!" was all the comment Adam made. "Are we going into this room?"

Thomas Anthony seemed to have been waiting for a ratiocinatory contradiction. As he could not combat the indefinite "Hum!" with his squared jaw, he ground it on his teeth with a sudden snap like a dog, and, turning his back, knocked with his knuckles on the lath door. They waited some time, but no response came. So the overseer, taking his overseership as licence, turned the handle and walked in, beckoning to Arethune.

The room was little else than a badly-planked, badly-raftered, badly-ventilated garret—so ill-ventilated that a haze of strange brownish smoke seemed to hang over it like a slung blanket. A coke stove with its pipe thrusting through the roof took the place of a fire grate, which the garret in ordinary did not possess. The window was uncurtained; the furniture consisted of a truckle bed, a chair, and a locker which served many purposes. Yet, in spite of its indigence and sparsity, Horndyke and Arethune stood in the middle of the garret, and in silence the overseer suggested and the engineer conceded that that tiny slab of a room was as wonderful as those mechanical marvels shadowing Halton, and upon which the window looked.

Upon rough deal shelves, and standing on the ground wherever they could safely be put, were such unique specimens of the potter's art that Adam stared at them in amazement, seeing them in England. Many—in fact the red clay of the slopes beyond Halton—res moulded, finished with Eastern nicety—

plates, dishes, cups, saucers, vases, coffers, boxes; some white, some blue; some of a fine porcelain painted to a marvel; others of rougher stone ware incised with ingenious arabesques beyond the old Spanish art; some inlaid on slip contrived with nimble complexity—all showing a marvellous skill in fashioning, modelling, and colouring. Especially did Arethune notice the rare vivid blues which this artist in ceramics obtained—a blue more remarkable than the jasper works of Josiah Wedgwood. Everything in the room was finished: nothing in a state of progress.

Arethune turned his glass upon the overseer, and, following the direction of Horndyke's eyes, started, for it lighted on a man lying on the truckle bed—a man whose appearance and condition were not the least among the unpleasant experiences of Mr Arethune in Halton-on-the-Heights.

His eyes were open, and he lay with his head over his pillow; but the eyes might have been the features of a dead animal—dank, dull, with fixed pin-point pupils. The face, drawn and fixed, too, like the face of a corpse, was covered by a curious bluish pale skin, apparently destitute of colour. The mouth, half open, was graced by full, well-turned, un-English, un-European lips, curling outwards and showing the neglected brownish teeth. His hair on head and face was white—white as snow, with the faint sheen of a wintry sun on it—fluffy and soft, unlike other hair. It lay back from his forehead in a thick mass, and his brows and eyes were well fringed. He was dressed in the common dress of a Halton workman, but his hands gleamed white and supple, with pointed fingers growing out of smooth, satin-skinned palms—soft as a fine lady's—over the patchwork bed-

cover, and from the thumb of one slipped away a wide flute-like stem with a large bowl screwed on it, not at its end. A small burnt-out oil lamp caught the stem of the pipe, richly chased and of fine workmanship. There was a flaccid immobility, an utter abandonment to the drug which laid him there, familiar enough as an association of memory in Adam Arethune's mind. Like the man's features, brows, mouth, and cranial formation, it was distinctly and peculiarly Oriental.

The engineer's glance wandered down the stem and took in the old and valuable pipe-bowl—its ruddy richness; its surface, soft and smooth as silk; its cunning casing, like gold-meshed spider's webs—and he mentally endorsed the proposition of Horndyke. Old Ivory's lodger was decidedly a mystery.

He turned away from the bed, looked at the overseer and smiled at the virile expression of disgust and scorn on Thomas Anthony's face—an expression concentrating its force into a monosyllable as Arethune caught it:

"Pig!" blurted Thomas Anthony.

Arethune laughed aloud—the low, cynical sound he occasionally indulged in.

"He's an opium-smoker. It's a common practice in the country he hails from. Tell me, Horndyke, and don't look so contemptuous—all men are slaves to habit: you are yourself and so am I—where did you pick him up?"

"I'm sorry I ever did pick him up. He's a disgrace!" muttered the overseer. "I didn't tell you he was a freak, because I thought you could see that for yourself. It was last Easter Monday he came to Halton, peddling, with a basket of toys of his own make. He sold them at the Fair for a penny a-piece. I saw him there. Of

course he drew the fools with his white hair and his queer looks. He isn't a bad-looking chap when he's in his senses, but he's odd. The next time I saw him he applied to me to rent a cowhouse below here that he wanted to turn into a potter's workshop. He got it for next to nothing. It goes with the cottage, and the cottage is mine. He fitted the shed up, put his furnace and lathe there, and I took him up, but"—here Horndyke's chin squared—"I told him the next time I saw *this*," he nodded to the recumbent figure, "he should sling his hook, and so he shall."

"Don't say that yet awhile. Does he take long to shake these bouts off?"

"No, sir, he gets out of them wonderful quick. And, what's more, he shows no signs of them when he's free. In fact"—Horndyke seemed to drop his words sullenly, closing his lips over them as if they were pulled out of him against his will—"in fact, if Mary Ivory was to come in here now and call out, 'Emmett! you've broken your word,' he'd be up from that bed and as clear and sane as you or I."

"Hum!" observed Adam Arethune once more. "That's as remarkable as the rest of him. Upon my word, for the last place that God made, Halton-on-the-Heights seems to be pregnant with food for the student in men and manners."

He had moved to the door as he spoke, and he shot a suggestion to Horndyke over his shoulder with his finger on the latch.

"I'd open that window if I were you. I shall be in an opium snooze myself if I stay here any longer. The place is full of it. Come out!"

The little crooked window fell back on its flimsy

hinges to Horndyke's push, and he joined Arethune on the landing.

Adam closed the door and said:

"I suppose our friend will be a rational being to-morrow?"

"I should say so, sir. If she comes home he'll be a rational being in an hour."

"Ah, but I can't wait for your friend the pug-girl." He caught with a smile the sharp baleful gleam of those furtive eyes for a time fraction. "Let me see! To-morrow is Sunday. I needn't ask you, I suppose, if Mr Emmett goes to church?"

"I don't know, sir. I should think not," said Horndyke stolidly.

"Well, I do. By the way, is there a Catholic church in the neighbourhood?"

He asked it a trifle ostentatiously, as if to impress on the overseer's mind the memory that the Arethunes were old and tried adherents of the ancient faith—carried by them for centuries inviolate against all prevalence of the "Gates of Hell."

"There's one in Scotland Road, sir. 'Tis but a chapel, and a dirty one at that. The folks hereabout are mostly Methody."

"So I should imagine from the sanctimonious stupidity of the place. It's a dirty church, you say?"—with that frown of fastidiousness which met so much in Halton.

"Well, the people that go to it are mostly Irish. The priest is an Irishman, and they are not renowned for cleanliness, sir."

"No, they are content with the godliness. And the incumbent is, I presume, a worthy disciple of the Royal College of Maynooth. Well, well, if there is no other

place of worship, I must take it as I find it, although I don't like Hibernian vermin—I don't mean the people, Horndyke, but their customary entymological accompaniments."

Horndyke grunted. He had no great sympathy with Arethune's dandyism. He brought him back to the subject at issue.

"Emmett, sir?" he said.

"Tell Emmett to come to the Crown to-morrow afternoon."

"I'll tell him," Horndyke observed slowly, "but I can't answer for his coming. He's a queer fellow."

Mr Arethune looked rather supercilious. Then he recollected that Emmett was a mystery—an abnormality—the expression of a racial habit of which Poe and De Quincey were the weak and Western portrayals, and a descendant of Heaven knows what—ancestrally. In short—as Horndyke concisely put it—a freak.

"Well, tell him to come anyhow, and we'll see what will happen. Good day to you, Mr Horndyke. How long shall I have to walk before I get one of those beastly waggons you call cabs in this place to take me to that criterion of discomfort—the Crown?"

CHAPTER VI

THE next morning Mr Arethune sought out the Catholic church in the Scotland Road, and on his way thither he had ample opportunity for commenting on the metamorphosic influence of Sundays and holidays on the work-people of Halton. Such fashions! such feathers! such hats! such bright waistcoats! such ties, scarves, gorgeously-patterned trousers and coats! such polished clogs on the very lowest stratum of the population. Such wonderful shoes on the higher! Such spotless, unbleached worsted stockings! such variegated petticoats and shawls! And they converged to the meeting-house, or, finally, and in most cases, to the public-house. There was nowhere else to go. And Adam Arethune thought that if there had been, they would certainly have gone to it.

One could have made a Lindenstrasse or a lady's mile in Halton and have obtained a grotesque burlesque of the Teutonic aristocratic exclusiveness in its German and English manifestation. Or one could have operated on the people's trend for show-seeking by giving them something to see—something for their immature, neglected, yet stock-taking brains to pounce upon and devour. For the brain is animal in its sensations and requirements. If it is not fed it dies off in inanition, and the rot from

its decomposition falls into the blood and diseases the muscles which depend on it for guidance. That is why moral indolence produces moral insanity, and the hardened sinner becomes a criminal lunatic.

By dint of frequent inquiry, and a certain amount of deviation, which did not tend to improve his naturally prickly temper, Mr Arethune tumbled upon a black-looking building, broken at its corner by a low arched doorway, showing within a flight of foul stone steps, thick and slimy with Halton mud. The church was not in Scotland Road itself, but in an ill-looking, narrow, malodorous turning off it, bearing a name somewhat like Pigsty Street, which Adam thought most appropriate.

Picking his way up the dirty steps, he followed them into a small, low, brown, stuffy chapel which had never been able, in the exposition of its more ornate religious practices, to get rid of its original Wesleyan conventicle aspect. A priest in a soiled surplice was preaching in a rich brogue as Arethune entered, and the sacerdotal eye, together with those of two or three of the congregation, sternly regarded the tardy incoming of a stranger. Under this fire, Adam subsided into the first vacant seat that offered itself, and, fixing his eyeglass, returned the glare of rebuke with a lively interest.

However, the brogue droned on; the eyes of the worshippers wandered away (except those of some of the girls, on whose minds the good looks and good clothes of the newcomer made an impression), and Mr Arethune was left in peace to turn his attention to devotions or distractions as it pleased him.

At first, the devotions had it, and Adam's attitude was that of an exemplary Christian. After the sermon, however, a hideous cacophony calling itself a choir

broke out from the regions above his head and caused his heavenward imaginings to twist themselves into virile and earthly maledictions on the disturbing din. He had rather hear a company of feline roof prowlers performing a concerted movement beneath his window at midnight. At least he could throw his boots at them, and Adam Arethune, who had the refined ear of an artist, felt that his mind would have been relieved if he had been able to bring the extremity of one of his boots to bear upon the conductor of the choir of the Catholic church off the Scotland Road. It was useless trying to be devout under such an infliction. He raised his head irritably and caught a sniff of Russian violets directly under his nose. Russian violets!—his favourite perfume!—in Halton-on-the-Heights! where the prevalent smells were swealing clay, smoke, dirt, and general stuffiness! Adam sniffed quite delightedly. The sweet odour came as a sweet sympathy with his dainty sense of the graces of life. There must be a lady in the church—near him: a woman with a touch of refinement about her. He fixed his glass and looked at his neighbours.

In front was a squab, fat old woman in a bebugled scarlet gown much too short for her, and a vivid green beplumed bonnet much too small. She carried her trade on her back: the proprietress of a small beer-house. Beside her sat her spouse in corduroys and fustian. No violets there! Next to them was a youth with a weak chin, weak legs, and the ashen-gray complexion so often seen in this place. No violets there! Beyond him were two pit girls in their Sunday clothes. No, the scent came further afield.

He looked across the aisle as the congregation prepared to sit down after the Creed, and caught in

slanting line with him the black-clad form of an exceptionally tall woman. If one may so describe it, his attention caught this woman by the hair—for primarily it was the cleanliness, sheen, and beauty of her hair that fixed the eyeglass. It was of the decided bronze colour so aimed at by specialists in hirsutery—thick and plentiful, and with the gloss of perfect care upon it, coiled into a great knob on to a cream-white neck: whiter by reason of a tiny mole just below the coil. A black cheap hat rested on the coil, and a black cheap gown could not disguise from Adam's sight, as it travelled downward from the head, the slim elegance of a young, supple, springy figure.

The face was turned towards the proceedings of the priest with the brogue, and Adam sniffed again to catch direct the scent of the violets as it came to him straight from that beautiful head of hair. What a find in Halton! —a woman who took pride in nature's gifts; kept her hair and her figure in constant care, and who appreciated the influences of such refinements as perfumery.

Adam Arethune snapped at this first agreeable experience that had come to him in the place with the avidity of a mind which, always on the look-out for the ideal chastities of life, touched its necessary defilements with the gingerly finger of intolerant dislike.

After, he took blame to himself that the process of the sacrificial ceremony conducted by the clerical Irishman was so culpably fused in his mind with the behaviour of the woman in the cheap black hat. This behaviour was so very immobile. Whatever happened—beyond the necessary movements of the rite—she stayed so passive and abstracted that Adam felt annoyed with her. Instead of following the doings at the altar, he found

himself mentally indulging in sporting ventures anent the probable beauty or plainness of the woman in the nave. It was ten—twenty—fifty to one that she was ugly. It so often happens that handsome hair and a perfect figure go with an ill-favoured face. It is quite the usual thing. Besides, he had never seen a really beautiful woman in his life. Not one, at least, who in an aggregate of nature's bounties could entirely please the hypercritical, æsthetical taste of Mr Arethune. And his life had wandered over a pretty wide range. How could he suppose he was going to light on the *rara avis* in this pokey hole of a Halton? What sacrilege to imagine for a moment that the highest susceptibilities of his fastidious nature were to be soothed and pleased in such a frowsy corner of it as this dirty, ill-smelling little church! Yet, this morning's offering became, presently, such a divided duty, and the proportion of curiosity regarding the bronze-haired worshipper became so largely predominant over the devotion, that at last Mr Arethune shut his prayer-book and gave himself up, with a lamentable backsliding and lack of armoury against the powers of darkness and temptation, to the undisturbed enjoyment of Russian violets' essence, and speculations concerning the woman who sent it him.

At the end of the mass the priest with the brogue decamped as hurriedly as he could in anticipation of a long-delayed breakfast, and the people began to stream out, most of them in anticipation of a social half hour in the public-house before dinner. But the woman in the black hat still knelt, absorbed in prayer, and Adam Arethune sat waiting for her. By this time he had become almost comically determined on seeing her face. That persistent want of concern in anything but the re-

quirements of Heaven bothered him. The still small voice, which might be a clarion for its driving power: the still small voice of vanity seemed to tick, tick, tick into his soul an assurance that if the woman with the bronze hair had known he was behind her, she would have looked round at him. That same still small voice ticked a corollary to the thought which pricked that vanity very sensibly. What a fool he was to be waiting there for the sight of a common Halton wench, who scented her beautiful hair with Russian violets and kept it clean! Besides, he had nothing else to do and——

She rose, unconscionably tall, almost on a level with himself as he rose, and there was an undulation in her movement in so doing that hit him as a familiar impression. That curtsey she swept to the tabernacle; he had surely seen that before. He started and stood stock-still in her way down the narrow path between the benches with her identity fixed before and as she turned round on him—Mary Ivory!

CHAPTER VII

ARETHUNE'S sensations upon this revelation were paradoxical. *Imprimis*, it flattered his self-love; for the logic of his appreciation had deduced an uncommon result out of the appearance of Mary Ivory; secondly, it brought with it a descent in his speculations and a sense of incongruity that caused him to stand quite still before her in surprise. It also brought a third sensation, much of neither of these, yet partaking of both.

He saw, when she turned upon him, that Mary Ivory's eyes were of a curious deep emerald green, prismatic as the gem. They impressed the onlooker with the notion that, in the iris, they were larger than the majority of eyes, and that the whites were bluer and slighter. When he had seen her at the door of Horndyke's hut, Arethune had only remarked on the peculiar effect of these features in her face. Now he knew why it was they attracted away from the rest in a manner more than is common. The pale face around them was refined and well moulded, but beyond those luminous green eyes, with their unconscious power for darting little specks and sparks of light with the play of emotion, as splints from a crystal are struck by the cutter, Mary Ivory's interlocutor scarcely went:

Those eyes sparkled the certainty into Arethune's

mind that she had, after all, known of his proximity. Perhaps she had glanced round to see him come in and for the rest of the ceremony wilfully kept her head turned away. It was equally certain that she wanted to speak to him. A faint colour mounted through the skin that took her name as a definition and caught the roots of the bronze hair; but she spoke to him lowly, hurriedly:

"May I say a word to you, sir?"

After those three impressions had passed, *seriatim*, through his mind, and had given place to unalloyed curiosity, he thought, transiently, what a good "lady" Mary Ivory would make, with her face, her stature, her carriage, the equipment for subjugation which lay in those green optics and that sweet-smelling hair. Then he smiled and nodded patronisingly, and moved aside as well as he could against the wooden pews and left the narrow passage out of the church for her to take.

She passed him and went quickly out of the door, and, picking up her dress, tripped down the miry corkscrew steps leading to the street; and Adam, following, deduced again from appearances that this extraordinary pug-girl was as neat and cleanly in her underclothing as she was about her head, for he caught a glimpse of bright shoes and well-fitting stockings clipping a foot and ankle that would have eclipsed the pedal extremities of most of those "ladies" with whom this clay-carrier might rank, and a spotless cambric petticoat edged with lace.

Out in the street she turned to him, and her face was normally pale and her manner as collected as if she had not been taking the liberty of speaking to the engineer of the works and the young brother of Sir James Arethune—of world-wide fame in mechanics.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for asking you to let me say

this to you—but—I think he deserves it—and Mr Horndyke may not—see his way. You came to my father's cottage yesterday?"

It was really her cottage, as out of her miserable wage she paid the rent of four shillings and sixpence a week exacted by the overseer. But she always spoke of it as her father's.

"Yes, Miss Ivory."

She flushed and started and looked at him searchingly with those green eyes. He had seen her in sacking, grimed and splashed, bare-footed and smeared, her beauties all hidden by dirt and depravity, and he called her "Miss Ivory." Was he making game of her?

No, apparently not! There was a wrinkle of utter sincerity between his eyes—good grey eyes just as well without the glass—and the pursed expression of attention about his clean-shaven lips.

"Yes, Miss Ivory?"

He said it again interrogatively, for she paused to look beyond his face into his mind for latent sarcasm, and found none.

"You came to see the man they call Emmett."

"Yes."

"And you found him——?"

"Yes."

"Mr Arethune, Mr Horndyke says you were disgusted——"

"I was not half so disgusted as Horndyke." He smiled now and looked nice. He had a good smile and very good teeth. "I have seen the thing so often before, and the man you call Emmett is—is—well, to use Horndyke's own expression—he's a bit of a freak—not English—not——"

"No, Asiatic."

She said it with the refined pronunciation which detaches the syllables. He thought her as great a mystery as Emmett and plunged into the problem.

"He is a friend of yours, isn't he?"

"He has been, and I don't want that wretched failing to stand in the way of his possible advancement with you."

She said it all so well, with such a nice choice of language. She looked so well-bred, and her manner was so good, that he forgot all about the pit drudgery and the Scoop near Shadden Dippen, and spoke to her as if she had been his sister.

"Does this deplorable habit manifest itself often in the man we call Emmett? By the way, do you know his real name, Miss Ivory?"

As he spoke he turned to leave the church archway, with the obvious intention of walking out of the squalid little street and down the Scotland Road in her company. She touched his coat sleeve with a shy earnestness and a black kid-gloved forefinger.

"If you please, sir, if you don't mind, I think we had better stay here. Halton is a terrible place for gossiping, and if Mr Horndyke got to know I had spoken to you——"

She trailed off with that delicate flush creeping again to the roots of her hair. He flashed at her as if she had really been his sister.

"Do you suppose I'm afraid of Horndyke?"

"No, sir. But I am."

She said it very quietly, and he felt quite sure that she meant it, and remembered Keziah Gathergold's words: "Ur cannot thole th' soight on un."

"I'm sorry to hear it, Miss Ivory," and the brow ridge was ominous and deep enough, and the face stern and purposive enough to foreshadow the possibility that there were intrinsic forces in the Adam Arethune of five-and-twenty to make, if by time, circumstance, and environment they became extrinsic, the Adam Arethune of five-and-forty an asset for the mind of the future to grapple.

Again the gloved finger-tip touched his arm.

"Understand me, sir," she said: "I do not wish to suggest anything which should prejudice you against Mr Horndyke. Mr Horndyke means well. Men can't help their feelings, and Mr Horndyke pays me a great compliment in—making me afraid of him. You asked me what Emmett's real name is. It is, I believe, Ahmed. But the folks hereabout, when first he came, twisted it into Emmett. I hear from Mr Horndyke that you had some intention of obtaining employment for him far away from Halton. If you had, I do beg you, sir, not to change your mind through what you may have seen yesterday. He is wasted here, and I should be glad to see him go—to something better."

Adam Arethune fixed his glass and looked at her, saying to himself:

"It seems to me that Thomas Anthony Horndyke is only one of the people you are afraid of and want to get rid of. I wonder why! I suppose it's the usual thing. They will and you won't. It must be a positive curse to a woman in your position to possess your personality —and yet—and yet—that sort of thing is not common in people like this Asiatic."

He thought this through his glass, then, dropping it, spoke reassuringly:

"If the man is a good workman, I don't suppose the habit of opium-smoking will prevent his getting a position in the Craven factory." He explained: "My brother has just lately bought the concession of the Craven china factory from the widow of Sir John Craven. It's not our business—that is, of course, iron; but my brother conceived the idea of taking up the Craven monopoly to prevent it being turned into a company, and so deteriorated and spoiled."

He said it all quite slowly and distinctly, as if he had been talking to Horndyke, with his eyes fixed on her, and she followed and understood it all, as her remark showed:

"Limited liability is the commercial deadlock, isn't it, sir?"

"It's dangerous—very dangerous. It's like a slack will to an unscrupulous trustee. Tell me, how has Ahmed been your friend?"

"He has taught me all I know," she said simply.

"I congratulate him on his powers as a tutor and upon the promise of his pupil. How long have you known him—and from whence, if a friend may inquire?"

A friend! The pink hue tinged Mary Ivory's skin once more.

"He came here three years ago, sir, just after my fifteenth birthday. He came to the Fair at Whitsun with a tray of toys which he had made himself. Horndyke offered him a situation in the colouring shop, and he took it, but he has got his own little workshop too, and he turns the most beautiful ornaments and chinaware, which he sells himself about the country. Sometimes he is gone for a month. You see, his work is so unique and is so saleable that Mr Horndyke is

obliged to humour him by letting him do as he likes, or he might lose him altogether."

"But if he goes to London, Mr Horndyke will lose him altogether."

Mary Ivory looked down, and her forehead wrinkled. Then she looked out of the archway across the street.

"Yes, but—he would be going to you—and—and—the interests of your family are a strong connection between Halton and London, sir."

"Yes, I suppose that is so. And this Asiatic taught you?"

"He took the greatest pains with me. He is very clever. He seems to have been everywhere and to have learned everything. He has taught me so well that I have been able, this last month, to take classes in the Institute, and if I find I can do it to the satisfaction of the directors, I hope to get a permanent engagement as teacher there."

"And then you will give up 'pugging'?"

Mary Ivory looked a trifle distressed.

"There is no other work in Halton for a girl but the pits, sir. It's a sad place for boys and girls and little children. There's not much room for heads among coals and clay, Mr Arethune."

"I suppose not, though I don't see why the people should be smothered under either. If you won't let me walk with you I may hope to meet you again, Miss Ivory. Oh, don't be afraid! I shall certainly come and chat to you, even in sackcloth and ashes. As for Ahmed, I shall see him presently, I expect, and I daresay it will be all right."

CHAPTER VIII

THE Crown afforded Mr Arethune, somewhere about one o'clock, a plain, fairly well-cooked, if sloppily-served meal. It was attended by a waiter in coal-dusty linen and iron-rusty cloth, and the table napery might have been whiter and the silver might have been brighter. It happened that Adam Arethune's mind was engrossed by a vexatious problem it had set itself within five hours of his stay in Halton, and which promised to thicken and thicken until it absorbed all the powers of a mind peculiar for its cynical observance and unaffected dismissal of the incidents and associations of life. It was this sum in three definitions which carried the coaly, rusty waiter scathless through his attention upon Mr Arethune on that Sunday afternoon. It was the complexity of this problem that smudged the sharp eyeglass to the fact of the table-cloth being in a high state of pressure but not clean—to the dulness of the forks—to the smeariness of the glass and the want of polish on the china. He saw nothing of this, but stared into the fire or out of the window, permitting the table derelictions to pass unnoticed, with the cold blood of a hardened campaigner in commercial travelling.

Upon his introduction to it he had stigmatised Halton-on-the-Heights as a God-forsaken hole, and

now, here he was, contemplating the characters of three people in it with a greater interest than he had ever before bestowed upon those specimens of his kind he had jostled. Oblivious of the waiter, lost to environment, he laughed scornfully at the grotesque notion of the vital concern he took in the doings of a clay-carrier—a pottery wench! For, in his keen and unsparing analysis of motive, Adam Arethune disdained casuistry, and his precise mind shoved Mary Ivory into the foreground as the primary base and ultimate cause of the question—the major premiss of this human syllogism. "She is so very remarkable," he excused himself to his resentful ego. "And she is very beautiful," the resentful ego admitted *malgré lui*. "She is very graceful." His imagination (and he had a flowery one) tricked out and placed this pug-girl in the garments and milieu to which her personal advantages laid claim on her behalf, and the result submitted that, although on her apparation into his life she had been a nightmare, in her fit position she would be a dream. He was not falling in love with her! Goodness gracious! An Arethune! The junior member of a family which was the social expression of the unmitigated snobbism of an uneventful antiquity and the religious adherent of a system of sublimated flunkeyism!

The formation of bigotry which we call education and habit rebelled at this. Adam Arethune felt a charitable disposition towards a poor and interesting co-religionist who, metaphorically speaking, sat at his gate—nothing more. Oh no, nothing more. That outer envelope of prejudices and fastidious dandyism constituting the material phenomenon of Mr Arethune thought it a pity the girl did not better her position by marriage with the overseer. It seemed ridiculous to suppose that a young

woman in Mary Ivory's station of life should be troubled by likes and dislikes. Mere fancy and affectation which should be suppressed and eradicated with as ruthless a hand as universal suffrage or any other equalising factor! A tissue of nonsense, never intended by nature! One man, to a woman of that kind, was just as good as another. What did it matter? The sympathies and antipathies of such folk were mere animal proclivities, a question of instinct — not intelligence. And the garrulous envelope, like the puny, narrow, ultra-conservative reasoner it is, did not stop to consider what a mighty thing instinct is—intuition—impulsion. But the inner ego, correct and regular, prone to set things straight and see them as they are, grappled that stack of vanity and error, and Adam sat before the fire, after his dinner, puffing vindictively at his cigar, with the conclusion forced upon him that Mary Ivory was too refined and too good for Horndyke; too good for anybody in Halton; too good for Halton. He didn't enjoy his smoking. Bother the girl! with her green eyes and redolent hair and her six foot of elegance. Why did she bother him? Even this queer creature whom he expected, ostensibly coming to him after a situation in his brother's china factory really came as a collateral on the principal of Mary Ivory. To-morrow he would go to the pits again and see her in her dirt and debasement. That would surely disgust him for good and all, and those prismatic green eyes with their untold possibilities would haunt him no more. Would it? No, no, no. The rectifying tormentor assured him beyond all doubt that this aspect of her only made Mary Ivory more respectable, showing her, as it did, in her filial duty and unmindful self-abnegation.

The Threshold

Adam Arethune threw the half-smoked cigar into the grate, complaining that it was badly rolled and wouldn't draw. Then, in a sudden access of fidgets, he got up and patrolled the room. Why did Horndyke pester the girl if she didn't want him? What a fool a man is who tries to wear down a woman into accepting him for a husband! What a chancy substratum for happiness! A thick-headed, bull-necked driving mechanic! There were dozens of girls in Halton who would suit Thomas Anthony. Why, in the name of all that was cussed and contradictory, did he want to fool round Mary Ivory and make her afraid of him? And this man who was coming to him? She was afraid of him, too, or Mr Arethune was much mistaken. His mind glanced back to yesterday, and he recalled that recumbent figure, the grey face, the pin-point eyes, turned back into their cavities with their whites only making a ghastly show; the full, parted Eastern lips; the queer, fluffy, colourless hair. Emmett, the mystery. What an ingenious twist of an alien name on the part of the Haltonians! What an example of insular prejudice against anything "furrin." How we hate it, we English! How we despise anything that is not British, and how our noses are too high and our hands too flaccid to smell out and crush the throng of leeches and parasites from every land on this planet which swarms upon us and sucks our blood!

A heavy tap on his door roused Adam Arethune out of a reverie upon domestic economy and the question of the desirability of trade protection. The landlord of the Crown rolled into the room upon his call, and announced, "A person to see you, sir," much as he might have done, if he had been obliged to let loose a virulent bacillus, a mad dog, a fever convalescent, a bailiff, a

begging letter writer, or any of life's objectionable incidents, with a greasy distaste of his errand on his big pale face.

"Tell him to come in," said Adam, with an alacrity to receive the objectionable visitor which quite distressed the landlord. "Come in, come in; it's all right."

He nodded, and dismissed the landlord, who, taking it in uncomplaining but reproachful silence, lumbered heavily out of the room to give place to Mr Arethune's visitor.

If people who have become slaves to the vicious habit of narcotics were only to see themselves under the influence, the sight should cure them, for there is a horrible outrage upon one's vanity in the shrunken, flimsy, loosened nerve collapse of any and every one of them. The unworthy wretch is an ugly doll without wires—a spectacle alike for pity and execration—be he a drunkard or an opium or hachisch inhaler; the screaming frenzy educed by the last being almost worse than the bestiality of the first or the imbecile insensibility of the second.

Under the drug Arethune had not been impressed by Emmett, as was only natural. He had looked a wizened abnormality. Standing there, in the doorway, Adam would not have recognised him. Horndyke was right. He showed no trace of any poisonous indulgence beyond the fact that he carried a languor about his movements and a distant expression in his eyes—eyes, not pink, as is common with those living on the blood lack of albinism, but of a pale tinged yellow—almost a greyish amber—the hue of a burnt-out ash of a mountain cedar.

He was tall, thin, springy, and wiry, with long limbs and hands, virile, flexile, and facile at wrists and

knuckles, giving, in their keen, firm fingers, his gift in plastic modelling. A good head, square and well set; a forehead looping the white hair across the top in an intelligent open above the smooth, silky eyebrows. Good, mobile, nervous features; the sensitive nostril of the plain scourer, either racial or actual; the curving labial conformation of the Eastern aristocrat—one doesn't see it in the helotes of these peoples—teeth, strong and even: a shining line of polished bone between full, well-shaped lips. There was a lithe turn about his movements as he entered the room and took the chair indicated by Adam suggesting the whimiscal notion that Mary Ivory had learned her grace of carriage from this man's easy deportment, as well as reading, writing, and the rules of grammar. There was no conformance to etiquette between master and workman in his manner. He stood with a quiet, unobtrusive dignity looking at Adam, and waiting his speech, much as a sovereign in exile might look at a stranger who had invaded his hiding-place.

Adam dropped his glass and stood on the hearthrug.

"What am I to call you?" he inquired bluntly.

"It might be as well to keep to Emmett. It is a sufficient travelling name."

There was nothing in his speech to betray him foreign save its smooth cadence and a precision in the pronunciation of vowel sounds which made his talk peculiarly pure and distinct against the slack looseness of the native.

"I don't like travelling names," said Mr Arethune. "Miss Ivory tells me your real name is Ahmed."

"That is quite so."

"Then, if you have no objection, I shall call you by it."

"If you please."

He bent his white head in condescension and waved the subject aside with a graceful hand-turn.

Adam Arethune liked those cedar ash eyes. There was nothing shallow or superficial about them. The Oriental inscrutability may be a trick, but it is a very disconcerting trick. This man may have inherited or acquired the profundity which is sheer politeness and often no more with the people from whom he sprang, but he had a manner which precluded the possibility of even the stupidest upstart treating him in accordance with his dress and apparent station.

He had an air of great sadness, as if some lifelong sorrow weighed him down, and his quiet dignity and his grave eyes would have snubbed anything approaching vulgar familiarity and condescension out of the mind of the most hardened snob.

Adam was neither stupid, an upstart, nor a snob. He could exhibit almost as perfect a grace of demeanour as Ahmed himself, and he had the spontaneous courtesy of the thinking gentleman. He motioned his visitor to a chair and returned to his own.

"I do so please, if you don't mind. I don't like the name of Emmett. It's Irish, and I don't like anything Irish—not that I've a prejudice against Ireland or the Irish as a country or a race. I don't think myself they've ever been treated fairly, but I also think it's mainly their own fault. They're so dirty. They've dirty minds and dirty habits. If they want to do a thing or to get a thing done, they rake up such a confounded lot of mud that they choke their own progress, and they have wallowed for centuries in such a ditch of ignorant superstition that it's almost hopeless to think of washing them

out with the flush of reason and enlightenment. I never think of Ireland but I think at the same time of Hercules and his stables. Have you been in England long, Mr Ahmed?"

"Some years."

"When did you first become interested in the art of ceramics?"

"I stayed one time with a Jew in the Charsi of Stamboul, and he worked in the potter's art, colouring both in print and slip. He worked too in mosaic; for which there is no call here."

"No. It isn't in the natural product of these parts. By the way, your blues are a marvel! Where do you find sulphate of baryta about Halton?"

Ahmed made a characteristic movement with his hands:

"It is not all nature, Mr Arethune. The clay must be manipulated, and there is a dexterity required in the burning which is the genius of the potter, or there would be no difference between your Wedgwood and one of the moulders yonder. A porcelain vase is not a drain pipe. It is not all earth."

He smiled. He was sitting with his back to the light, and Adam could see the line of his teeth shining at him; but the smile was gone in a fraction. Yet it was a good smile, and made the worn, sad eyes look very honest. Adam changed his posture and leaned his elbow on the arm of his chair, wondering how he could best, most inoffensively frame what he felt he must say. It would have been so easy with an Englishman of any social grade. Their native bucolicism of temperament and the commercial instinct which makes most Britons sail imperturbably and doggedly over all intervening

obstacles and objections to the desired end—if the end be a good-paying thing—would have lightened his task considerably, for he would have known that much of the reproof he felt constrained to give, and the promise he was conscientiously bound to exact, would have been water on a duck's back, and only kept in force by the likelihood of losing that good-paying thing on its infraction.

Here no such threat or inducement held sway. Adam knew by intuition that this dignified albino in his fustian clothes would resent a rebuke as a liberty, would give no gage and exact none, which should interfere with that freedom of the senses which, by constant usage, has become with his race one of those acquired habits which have grown so like nature that they pass in the mind of the unthinking for her proclivities—like bastard children parading their illegitimacy through their strong resemblance to the legal offspring. Those habits which lull the senses into a spurious elysium—those habits which tickle the senses into a spurious excitation—those habits which pamper, spoil, and disease the senses like overfed domestic pets in the hands of fools—those habits are hereditary engrained "nature" in the Eastern mind; and Adam, knowing this, wondered how he was going to get the man who called himself Emmett to give him his assurance that he wouldn't touch opium any more.

"You are wasted in Halton, Mr Ahmed. Is your stay here voluntary or accidental? Is it because you happened on Halton and Horndyke befriended you, or because you know so little of England that you have chosen its gloomiest corner as your dwelling-place?"

"I know England well, Mr Arethune. I travelled to

Halton in pursuit of an idea, and Horndyke was a convenience, and I used him. He is a convenience still. I use him still. Halton is gloomy perhaps, to the superficial, but there are beauties in Halton which England beside does not contain, Mr Arethune."

"Mary Ivory," thought Adam—"and yet——" He jumped at a conclusion and doubted, feeling more difficult than ever, and less self-reliant than during his whole previous life.

There was something about the man that attracted him too. A puzzle—a personal charm that made him like the man for himself, and to want to solve the puzzle. If he had lost sight of Ahmed then, he would have known that he had lost an opportunity for some inscrutable thing far above and beyond the needs of the china works on the Thames embankment.

"As it is a question of partiality with you, I must put it that I want you to do me a favour, then," he said pleasantly.

Ahmed bent his head gravely, unsmilingly.

"I want you to come to London to work for my brother. I wrote to him last night and told him I had made a find."

Ahmed's face possessed the peculiarity of his species. It never changed colour, and emotion was expressed by a quick pulsation between the skin of his cheek. This was very transient and passed now.

"Wasn't it a little previous, Mr Arethune, to speak to Sir James before you spoke to me?"

Adam felt the incongruity of the dress and appearance which criticised his doings. He felt very much inclined to lose his temper with his visitor for being a fraud and a delusion. He felt inclined to say to him: "Leave off

masquerading. Go and put yourself into—well, if not purple—broadcloth and fine linen, and come back and dine with me and we'll talk it over."

He shifted his position irritably, as if the inability to say this aloud jarred on him, as there is no doubt it did. However, he spoke diplomatically:

"I don't think so. I merely made a statement from my own observation. I hope I shall not have to let the subject drop with my brother. I hope you will have no objection to coming to London."

The passing pulsation was again perceptible: very—very slight.

"I have a most decided objection to going to London," Ahmed said evenly.

Mr Arethune sat up and looked at him.

"You have?" he said vacuously, for this position had not occurred to him as among the possibilities.

"I have," Ahmed conceded.

There was a pause, and the stranger answered the pause.

"No, it is not that." He said it in his smooth way, and with his slight, foreign, disclaiming gesture. "No, it is not that. It is a merely political reason which keeps me from your overwhelming metropolis. I should not be tapped on the shoulder by one of your policemen. But London is cosmopolitan, and there are many of my own people there, and, once seen, such sports of nature as myself are not easily forgotten, Mr Arethune."

As he said it, with a slight comprehensive gesture covering his white hair and his pallid skin, Adam thought this marking out of him from his fellows probably explained some of the sadness in his manner. It might be, too, that the physical lack often going with this

phenomenon weighed upon the spirits of a man of his race and character. Adam Arethune suspected that his main distaste of London, where he might perhaps chance upon some units of his people, might be reduced to the radical misanthropism which accompanies his state.

Yet, he said it was political, and the appearance of such a man in Halton under such circumstances was sufficiently remarkable to form a subject of speculation.

"Can your prejudices not be overcome?" Adam asked with puckered brow, rather put out.

"I fear not. As regards London particularly, it is final and immovable—under the present disposition of things. As regards England generally, it is conditioned —but—there is one interest to me in Halton which, frankly, I do not wish to lose or leave."

Adam Arethune rose and Ahmed rose too.

"Is it Mary Ivory?" asked the young engineer bluntly.

Outspeaking often disconcerts an Oriental. He isn't used to it. This direct query did not disconcert Ahmed. He smiled and answered quite readily:

"Yes, it is Mary Ivory. I told you I came to Halton on the track of an idea. The idea was Mary Ivory. I saw her in Oldham four years ago, on a holiday with a pit foreman and his sister. I found that they came from Halton-on-the-Heights, and I came here too."

"Do you love her?" It was as uncompromising as before. The queer grey sorrow flitted across the pale face.

"No. That is not for me," he said with comprehensive simplicity. "She is—wonderful. Mr Arethune, have you ever seen pigs nosing for truffles?"

"Yes."

"Whenever I see Horndyke with Mary Ivory, which isn't often if she can help it, I think of the pigs and the truffles. I am sorry not to be able to meet your wishes, but if going to London be a *sine qua non*, it is impossible. Good-bye, and thank you."

He terminated the interview. He put out his hand, and Adam took it, and Emmett the mystery departed from the Crown as much a mystery as he came to it.

CHAPTER IX

"IN my last I told you that I should return as soon as the necessary notifications on the block repairs were made. I have changed my mind. I shall stay and see the gear in active work. That is to say, I shall thoroughly overhaul the engines—and that will take about a fortnight. I think it as well for our credit. There are one or two hitches in the tiger-tooth revolutions which may be as well smoothed.

"The man about whom I spoke to you on Saturday night is unwilling to change his situation. I want to know why. You know me, how tenacious I am even in trivial things, and how I squirm under contradiction. You see, I am self-analytical, Jim. I am going to find out why. You may think it not worth while. I do. There is a woman, or rather a girl, here, who interests me mightily also, through the man. He is a bit of an enigma. She is perfectly straight. But I think she is the hub of his motion, so, as I say, she interests me. I fancy I see you smile. No, my dear Jim, I am still true to my purpose, and I am in close correspondence with Rome. This morning, I am sorry to say, the girl got between me and my duty. She is a Catholic, and we sat near each other at church. Such a dreadful little church—like a barn on stilts—and she distracted me

through those foibles of mine concerning the smaller refinements of life which I am well aware of as vanities, but which, to my thinking, are an earnest of a certain cleanliness and purity of mind. It would be a real infliction to me to be dirty, my dear Jim, so I suppose for the true chastisement of my body and the ascendency of my soul I should join one of our holy orders which makes it a conscience point never to wash itself.

"I shall have another shot at the enigma, for he would be most useful to you. Meantime, and while I am absent, pray knock some sense into Edward Arethune. He is a pious man, and should see the necessity of exerting himself for Joan and the children. He writes me in his usual distressed state, begging for help and saying he does what he can. I cannot help but think that Edward is characteristically lazy. He might well take my place with you when I am gone."

Mental physiologists have given us, from time to time, learned dissertations on the nerves of the inner senses. Surely the nerves of the inner senses descend from the cerebrum through the body to the motor nerves of the fingers, and we often *read* a man better than we *hear* him. That the dandified Adam Arethune—eye-glassed, well dressed, perfumed, and clean-linened—should hide behind this glossy exterior of five-and-twenty a purpose such as he shadowed forth in his letter to his brother, seems inexplicable—unthinkable. And yet it was so.

Born, the youngest son of an engineer; brought up, together with his twelve years' older brother, to his father's trade; left, at his father's death, together with this brother, the sole representatives of a great mechanical house, he had nursed and fostered—apart from the algebraic conditions of his professions—a powerful and

exuberant imagination—an imagination grappling that truly beautiful which compasses the perfect. For, a thing to be truly beautiful must hold all that is good, wise, and just. Its detriment in one of these attributes is a taint or scar. It is incomplete, false, and deathly. Adam Arethune saw, in his mind's eye, the ideal life. That is to say, his mind, overgrown by that ecstatic imagination, clamoured for cleanliness and air—the ozone of the real content. Probably the precision of his training in mechanics had tutored this faculty of ideation more than if it had been left to dream itself into the evolution of a poet or musician, where it might have spent itself in printing ink, and worn itself against the buffets and shoves of unsentimental, and, if it was worth it, savage and envious criticism. It is a good thing when the idealist becomes an inspired dreamer, and sings in his sleep. His lyrics—be they poems, novels, lectures, theories, or what not—stand or fall by their commercial value with his contemporaries or posterity. If there is nothing in them but the canary's twitter of a pretty fancy, they are wind, and vapour, and pass, to become components of what is stronger and more staying. If they are thick and solid, of an ossiferous structure that will stand on the aggregate of matter—throw the bones to the dogs, dreamer, and watch your beautiful thoughts wrangled over and gnawed till they scatter, dissected and analysed, to be re-set by posterity exactly at their worth and no more.

It might have been as well perhaps if Adam could have done this. If that inner nature of him had had its way at the outset, he might have crept through life with only half of him on its exigencies and the other half up in the clouds—become careless, thriftless, inconsequent,

slovenly, and—a genius. As it was, the exactness of his training, the inelastic conditions of his environment, made him precise, logical, shrewd, and inclined to be despairing of the present state of things and anxious for the future. He didn't study metaphysics. Engineers don't. He was not psychic. At least, he didn't recognise the psychic ascendency within him. His mind was a machine becogged and bescrewed like all other machines: a thing to be driven. His body was a bundle of nerves and muscles, which, beyond the secondary vanities of washing and tittivating, he had under stern control as an unruly fabric to be suppressed—a thing of earth, of not much account, save at meal times or toilet times or such periods. His soul was an essence—delicate, fragile, and uncommonly skeery—an inexplicable affair, easily slain, and not to be revived save under the hand of an ordained priest. As a matter of fact, his soul was not his own business. It and its doings lay at the sacerdotal disposal. They could either damn it or save it. They held the keys of the kingdom of heaven. They said so. And Adam troubled himself about the functions of his soul and the reality of heaven as matters of excogitation and individual attention as much as his neighbours.

But he was ambitious and fond of power. It was a justifiable ambition and a want of a power that brought its own palliation and excuse. He saw that many things were crooked and warped. He felt a strength in him of which he himself, in himself, was totally ignorant. He felt it, like a child in embryo, moving and stirring to do, and, goaded by this and by the cry of that crushed imagination, he looked about for means to do. The position of those men who, by the imposition of hands,

can take away the sins of the world, attracted him mightily. As he felt nothing but disgust and loathing for the dirt and grime of life as exemplified in its sensualities and petty weaknesses, he decided that he had a vocation to the priesthood; and his coming to Halton had been the consequence of an interview with his brother, in which James had advised him to think it over and to do nothing hurriedly.

The green eyes of Mary Ivory were the first of those insulating mysteries of life which had, in the slightest degree, attracted him. And he resented this attraction as an unworthy weakness, as a machination of that extremely exact Devil in whom he firmly and implicitly believed, as a temptation. Besides, she was only a pug-girl! The Devil was assailing his vanity and his morals at once.

An impertinent interposition on the part of the Prince of Darkness. But Adam knew—he had been always told—that immediately a true son of the Church makes a firm purpose to do something for the gratification of Heaven, the Prince of Darkness constitutes himself into a "roaring lion," seeking to devour him through temptation and assault. But when the Devil sought to divert Adam from his intentions by means of an Eve who staggered under the weight of five tons of clay daily, it became a sheer insult to his sense of fitness—and there ought to be fitness even in temptation. Adam did not think that the eyes of a good woman may be surer poles to salvation than the hands of a man, or that the ceremony of those last may be an imposition in more senses than one.

Adam's Roman correspondent would have decried this as heresy, as savouring of the ultra-diabolical

affection of rationalism. Woman is a snare—life a delusion! Look up, my son! There's clay below, and behold! there's the nebular hypothesis somewhere in the clouds. Does its reduction to tangible fact lay to the hands of a man or before the eyes of a woman? Let us grope as children of darkness, and, by touch of things which are nearest, we may see those better which are distant. Who knows! Who knows! In God's name, let us see—and to see we must live and not dream.

Every man, as an expression of the infinite, contains two potentialities. One: that observing, investigating, deducing ego—the grand vizier and chancellor of the will—which recognises things and people as the assets and associations of its life. This is the sure logic—the true conscience. It may be styled the numeral of existence. The other: a conglomerate of received impressions, traditions, teachings, dogmas, other people's notions, conventionality, habit, acquired beliefs. This is the cypher, and the total depends on how it is placed with regard to the numeral. The first of these urged Adam Arethune to stay in Halton to cultivate an opium-smoking foreign workman and a clay-carrier, for their own sakes and because that obstinate ego knew them as factors in the sum of his life. The second made him dress himself with his usual elaborate neatness, address his letter to his brother, and let the lies within it, which placed his reasons for staying in Halton on an objective plane, go Londonwards without scruple. He really thought they were true, and he pushed aside that ego, as many men do, condemning it as a mischievous intervention of that other nebular hypothesis which is supposed to smell of sulphur.

It went and was done with, and Adam proceeded to work out his plan of disgusting himself with the squalid accidents surrounding and dimming the inherent lustre of Mary Ivory.

It was Monday morning, and he betook himself to the pits, of course to see the gears running and to watch with the eye of an expert the steady interaction of those great iron giants; and, as a side issue, and a very second-rate matter, to compare the Mary Ivory of Monday with the Mary Ivory of Sunday.

He stayed at the pits the greater part of the morning, closely attended by Horndyke and Gathergold—the former sullen and silent, as if some indigestible happening weighed on his mind; the latter garrulous enough when the overseer's back was turned. No Mary Ivory appeared amidst the army of frights who scudded the soft, hot sand to and fro, moving mounds of blue mud. Adam's quick eye occasionally and unostentatiously scanned the swarm, but at no time in the morning did that overtopping figure appear.

"You are short-handed to-day," he said to Gathergold, while Horndyke's back was turned.

"Are we, sir? No more'n usual a Monday. Monday's ay summat slack." He ran his eye over the labourers he could see. "I've been round, sir, and—no, I think we're pretty full up."

"You haven't got that tall girl I saw here on Friday."

"Oh, Polly Ivory! No, mebbe hur feyther's bad. I don't hould Polly Ivory o' no account as to hur goings an' comings. Hur maks that roight wi' Muster Horndyke."

Adam tried Mr Horndyke by and by.

"Is old Ivory ill?"

"Not that I know of."

"Why is his daughter not at work?"

"I don't know."

This was so short, so surly, so respectless, that Adam fixed his glass and stared at the overseer. But the overseer turned his broad shoulder and walked away: a marvellous piece of effrontery!

Adam called him back sharply, with the Arethunesque snap.

"What's the matter with you to-day, Horndyke?"

Thomas Anthony's furtive eyes found the ground engrossing, and his answer was a mumbled "Nothing."

"Why do you speak to me like that?"

"I—beg—your—pardon,—sir." It might have been pulled out of him with pincers.

"I'm glad to hear it." Mr Arethune dropped his glass with a ping against the buttons of his waistcoat. "I am not going to stay any longer to-day." He spoke directly to Thomas Anthony. "I am going across the Dippen to see if there is anything wrong with old Ivory." Thomas Anthony made a movement. It might have been aggressive—disputatory—or it might have been a step in companionship. Adam took it as the last. "No, you needn't come. I can find my own way. Good day to you. Good day, Gathergold."

He strode away, and Gathergold, who had strolled up in time to receive Mr Arethune's valediction, strolled away again and remarked after to his sister Keziah, when she appeared with his dinner, that "Muster Horndyke was in the blackest temper he'd ever seen him in, and he'd given 'em a taste of some pretty dirty moods sin' he'd been overseer at them pits, too."

CHAPTER X

He struck across Shadden Dippen with the firm foot and quick step of resolve. It was no use telling himself that this girl interested him through the foreign albino. He didn't attempt casuistry to himself. He knew that she came before the albino, and in a manner quite inexplicable to his conservative consciousness. He had happened on Mary Ivory on Friday afternoon, and since Friday afternoon his thoughts and his deeds had revolved round Mary Ivory. Such an experience was unique to Adam Arethune, and, in consistency with his character and temperament, he must give the girl a place in the scheme of his doings—make her an objective charity centre—something of that sort—or she would grow to pervade all, and damage the integrity of his life and resolution. Goodness knows, she didn't want to grow any more. Six foot high was tall enough for any woman. He only just cleared it himself. And somehow or other, as he strode across that waste land between the pits and the cottage, he felt an angry conviction that Mary Ivory, however his obstinacy "placed" her, would look *at* him all the days of his life. Through the clouds of distance—through the mists of the future—through what came or what followed—that clay creature would meet him face to face. He would never be able to push

her down or below. By the time he reached the dilapidated shack with its gaudy porch, that even treading foot of his stamped resentment and anger beneath his pressure on the moss. For that last whisper was one of those thrills of life which drown the yells and screams of all noisier and more blatant associations. He was annoyed and disturbed. He felt as if this woman was a devilish house-wrecker, bringing the bricks of his egoism about his ears. And to think of it! If she had been a duchess, a princess, a queen, an empress, it would have been bad enough. But—a——!

There she was, standing under the garish porch with her back to him. He came across the Dippen from the off side, and he first saw the flecking of her lilac cotton gown between the green crosses of the little arch. As he trod on over the soft moss, he heard her speaking, and knew someone else was standing in the doorway.

"You promised me faithfully," she was saying.

"I did—yes—and broke it. Miriam, my sex are like froward children, and break promises like brittle toys."

"I am ashamed to hear you say so; and it is a libel upon children to compare them to weak slaves of habit. Will you promise me again?"

"No."

"Why?"

The smooth voice roughened and strengthened, as if the speaker had turned to her:

"I'll tell you, Miriam. I won't promise, because it is not for my sake you wish to exact it. You are not cross with me because I succumbed to a friendly drug which lulls and soothes me into forgetfulness and a factitious paradise at times of torture and mind-madness. You are not cross with me. You are cross because that vain

young man, whose pretty exterior has fascinated you, saw me."

"I want him—I want everybody to respect you."

"Bah! what do I care for his respect?—a pretty doll out of a habit-maker's window. Yet, I will be just. There's purpose and strength in him, Miriam, if he stand the fire. Will he, think you? I wonder. Chojukumi! I am thinking for you. Don't let that young man run havoc in the garden of your beautiful mind. He'll trample the roses. He isn't worth it, my Miriam. Take your old teacher's word for it. I don't say he is an empty-headed coxcomb, or a popinjay, or use the language of your poor lover: nay, don't shiver, the workman has given you his best. It is lowly, and the soul of you will have none of it; but he is a faithful worshipper. I say this young man is a baby in leading strings—a colt in the hands of the breaker—one of my slabs of clay on my potter's lathe—not burned—not tried—with the lash above his curly head—with the nurse's hand ready to smite—and he is a scion of one of those English families beginning in a scavenger and ending in a knight. Miriam, azizi, he is a possible complication—and you—are—a—pug-girl from the mud pits of Oton-o'-th'-Oights."

He said it distinctly, with cruel clearness, and waited its effect without movement. Adam was close enough to see by the curving of the lilac cotton gown that Mary Ivory turned her head and looked away out over to those dim mountains encircling Halton and beyond into the murky, nebulous world. He heard her, even at the stretch he stood away from her, heave a long deep sigh—a sigh that almost quivered into a sob. If he had been a snob or an upstart, Adam Arethune might have flashed

indignant and torrid at the estimate of him given to this pug-girl by this potter. But he was not a snob, and he was not an upstart, and even if the primitive layer of his family had been an earth-digger, he remembered that the primogenital evolution of humanity, from whose concrete and modern exposition he took his name, had been diggers and sextons, and would be diggers and sextons while they remained—Adamite—children of blood and sons of the soil. This reflection didn't come *in extenso.* It was merely a passing assertion of the clarifying ego; but, essentially, it prompted his action nevertheless.

He stepped forward into the porch.

"Thank you, Mr Ahmed, for your good opinion of me." He laughed as he saw the quick beat which obtained for blood change with him pulse into the cheek of the Asiatic. "We dismiss it, if you've no objection, by playing ball with it. I send it back to you by saying that if my line began in a scavenger, he must have had something knightly in him, and his present manifestation must of necessity be the survival of the fittest; and though you, yourself, are masquerading at scavenging even now, there's more of the knight about you than there is of the muck-raker. Good morning, Miss Ivory."

The side flash of his eye caught the pulsing beat, for the remark betrayed a suspicion which, in his conversation with Ahmed, Adam had kept carefully at the back of his head. He veered round to Mary and took her hand, feeling that he had paid the Eastern, and remarking, again mentally, that Mary Ivory greeted him in a strained silence and that her face was burning. His mind was so occupied with that estimate of himself that he had forgotten why it was given to the girl. He

remembered presently, and cleared the fence with the grace of a quick wit.

He smiled at her.

"I suppose it was me he was talking about (I caught it as I came up the slope). It must have been, for I have often been told that, hundreds of years ago, the first Arethune was the parish gravedigger—the respectable edition of the scavenger, Mr Ahmed—the second, his son, was the village schoolmaster, and their current descendant and representative, my brother, has been knighted. It must have been me. Why was he casting slurs of reproach at me, Miss Ivory?—and to you, of all people. Ah, I guess. I wanted to entice him away from Halton. Have I offended you by doing so, Ahmed? I hope not. I keep to my opinion that you are wasted here, however you take it. Miss Mary, I came up to see what kept you from the pit to-day."

He had asked her questions, and he dismissed the answers—unspoken—unheeded. He lightly flung his shallow reasons at Ahmed, and his bright steely eyes, with their straight-cut lids slitting the pupil—the eyes of nature's own scout—only showed that he knew what the other man meant. While he asked her why she had stayed away, the incongruity of her going at all made him smile at her while he asked it, and the vanity of man poised her far, far above Halton for admitting—unwittingly, as she must have done it—her admiration for him.

There are some women who are singularly complemental. It doesn't matter where one finds them—what doing—what showing. They speak: one is attracted. They move: one is watchful. They entangle themselves in one's affairs. And one is enthralled, engrossed, and

pleased at their notice. It doesn't matter what she is or where she is. She may be a woman off the street, or a woman off a throne. It's all the same. One's sole feeling on the first condition is its blind asymmetry. One's feeling on the last is its fitness. Her contact is gracious. If she comes out of a pit or from the seats of the high and mighty, the male animal wants to make her think well of him—to like—to admire—to—— What beside? Oh, nothing! nothing! As a Mary Ivory she is as distant and inaccessible as if she were that marvellous archetype of the lady novelist—Scheherazade.

Adam Arethune felt that Mary Ivory was a beautiful young woman of such taste and discrimination that he almost laughed aloud at the notion of her going to the pit below in any capacity whatever, and his eyes, coming back from their quick flash at Ahmed, looked a lively accordance with her resolution, when she said, speaking for the first time:

"I am not going to the pits any more, sir."

"I am glad to hear it," Adam said with truthful spontaneity. "Whose doing is that?"

"My own. I—I—can't go again, and there are so many wanting the work. I am going down to the head master of the night school to know if he can give me something as remunerative to take its place. While father lives I must stay in Halton. If it were not for father—I should take service—far away—far away."

"You'd find that perhaps cleaner, but almost as bad as the Halton pits for drudgery. The night school is the most promising. I am unfeignedly glad to hear you have decided against the superintendence of Mr Horndyke."

He gave the name with Gathergold's provincial inflection. An enigmatic smile—half startled, half sad,

weary and worried—a smile that scored a line of perplexity on her brow—flitted across her face.

"I'm not sure that it wouldn't be better for me if I could endure the idea of Mr Horndyke's superintendence with greater equanimity," she said.

If she had not been one of those outside women, Adam Arethune might have met this possibility more decisively than he felt himself capable of doing. If Ahmed had only taken himself off, he might have reasoned the thing out in the confidential, fraternal manner he had adopted on Sunday morning. Or he might have anticipated future province, and advised, paternally, confidentially, with Mary as confitent and himself as confessor. But Emmett, the mystery, framed in the dark doorway, quashed these positions by his determined presence—inscrutable, watchful, on guard.

Adam took the citadel by a coup.

"I have not given you up, Mr Ahmed, and though you won't come to us, I should like to see your work and your workshop. May I?"

CHAPTER XI

THE cowshed which Ahmed had metamorphosed into a pottery workshop had been enlarged and strengthened entirely by his own hands into a long, low, patchy, and unsightly, but weather and wind-proof building. Adam Arethune was somewhat surprised at the primitive mind of the Asiatic, who, apparently, altogether eschewed mechanical help in his work. The potter's wheel, lathe, and furnace were of the pattern current in this most ancient of the arts in the time of Pindar, when the vase of Arcesilaus was turned out to become a monument of the possibilities latent in the slime of the earth. Ahmed might have fashioned and burnt his cakes and balls of mud in the time of the Chinese emperors Yao or Chun, two thousand years before the Christian era. And the printing and slip work, too, were odd and fanciful. Once inside the door of this converted cowshed, Adam felt shut out from time; for, apart from the fact of its being obviously a potter's shop, it was suggestively a storehouse for other and more mental matters. There was no apparent or tangible reason for this supposition. In fact, it came to Arethune on the breath of a curious, spicy odour—like frankincense—a smell that brought the country of the man beside him strong before his senses—a smell wafting the sorcery,

the glamour, the mystery of the East to his patent-leathered feet.

The shed had been divided into two rooms or compartments, one, the inner of which, Ahmed kept for the cleaner, æsthetical phase of his trade. Out of this now came a figure which Arethune's wandering fancy might well have construed into a gnome or a genie out of an Oriental fable—a humpbacked man or boy, or something—long in the arms, bowed in the legs, large in the head, shock-haired, red, wild, and unkempt, with a pair of the finest and softest dark eyes glowing out of his face that Adam had ever seen.

This apparition grinned, displaying a row of jagged yellow teeth, broken and pointed like pins.

"Eliah Sedgrook," said Ahmed, "I have brought a great gentleman to see our shop."

Eliah Sedgrook threw back his head, seemed to open his face into a wide red cavern fringed with pointed *cheveux de frise*, and laughed in detached dissonances.

"What is it?" murmured Adam, glancing from the curiosity at his side to the curiosity in the doorway.

"Eliah Sedgrook was a lighterman down at the Cluny Cut collieries. When I came here he attached himself to me: I suppose because we are both odd, and birds of a feather—you know your saying. He lives in a little shanty in the grounds of the Grange, and the place is so neglected that he is unmolested. You have not been here long enough to hear much about the haunted Grange, but I think Eliah yonder keeps good friends with the ghosts. Am I not right, oghlani?"

The hunchback shook his shock head, laughed again, and dived past Ahmed out into the open.

"What is it?" Arethune asked again, following the

uncouth figure with his eyes. "Is it a man or a boy? You called it 'oghlani.'"

"A youth perhaps in years, an infant and an old man in understanding. Ugly to look at—and so—reviled; faithful as a house dog—and so—condemned—for being human and not canine. A good workman—a good watchman—silent, safe, and, as I said, odd, like me. I believe he keeps the old Grange yonder empty so he may be unmolested, and you'll well fancy that Eliah Sedgrook, by aid of a candle and a sheet, would make a sufficiently grotesque phantom."

Ahmed waved that well-turned hand of his, and dismissed Eliah Sedgrook in the flesh as an unimportant accident. He laid much greater stress on a funny little clay model of the hunchback, coloured to life, and most delicately moulded, which he pointed out to Arethune with pardonable pride.

"It is marvellous!" Adam said very truthfully, turning it about admiringly.

Emmett the mystery smiled. When his modelling was praised, he showed pleasure, and only then.

"I tell you what." Adam turned on him. "You owe me something for depreciating me just now to Mary Ivory. Give me this little figure in extenuation."

Ahmed looked at him, and made a quaint, graceful movement forward, with the faint beat in his cheek and outspread hands.

"I was wrong, Mr Arethune. I did depreciate you—and yet—not entirely. There are furnaces before you, and you in your turn must be a carrier of clay. Yes, yes, so it is written. While the woman rests and sleeps, the man must toil and strive—for his error—for his pride. It is the curse of our philosophies, effendi, that none of

the prophets of our great creeds ever knew or studied women. There is a greater fire behind you than I thought for, and the barriers are high, thick, and stout to resist the flame of the right. You can keep the figure. I can call the model with a whistle, and do it again."

"Are you a fortune-teller?" Adam inquired, his white teeth showing.

"No, effendi. I have lived long and in many places and I have studied men as living books. That makes fortune-telling easy, kuzum."

CHAPTER XII

IT was with slow step and in absence of mind that Adam Arethune paced his way back to the High Street of Halton. Hitherto he could recall no occasion on which other people's business had operated so significantly upon his thoughts as to exclude from their machinery all and every idea of self. The rule's exception came with this strange acquaintance whose pottery workshop he had just left. It was not his rare art at which Arethune marvelled, though his excellence in that was great and facile—it was himself. It was not his comparative abnormalism—it was the Man. Glimpses of a unique and beautiful mind, crippled and cramped by physical defect, peeped out of his sayings, plain to the younger man's understanding. He did not know it, but it was this same unique and beautiful mind in himself, whispering through an invincible egotism, which caught at the other and conned it, to the momentary expulsion of that egotism. Who was this man? Why was he there? And why did he seek to spread a net of guardianship round that beautiful clay creature?—that other pearl in the slime! Adam again comforted himself with the reflection that he felt so charitable towards her. In service! She had said she would go to service. Was there any lady of his acquaintance with whom he could place her? There was Joan, the wife of that cousin—the

pious indolent. He could speak to Joan: a sensible woman—full of the shifts and contrivances incident upon marriage with an exemplary Christian, short of cash and energy. Should he speak to Joan? No. He didn't want to see Mary Ivory in a cap and apron. As bad a masquerade as Ahmed in fustian and clogs. Neither fitted—round pegs in square holes. The Halton night school was better than the pits—better than servitude. She could teach rudimentary learning, by means of dog's-eared primers and chalk and cardboard, to ragamuffins and wastrels of both sexes; but at least it was authority, and Mary Ivory was one of those women who seemed to owe no allegiance. Let her go to the night school, and he would keep a watchful eye on her—in all platonic interest—at five-and-twenty—with a young woman of superior personal attractions, who liked him sufficiently well to get herself scolded for so doing. This was a fine example of casuistry—this arrangement of Adam Arethune's. It was a good show up of the power of the mind to humbug itself.

Full of his cogitations, he had walked the whole distance to the Crown Hotel from Shadden Dippen and its neighbourhood. He came up the steps with thought-bowed head, only lifting it to escape an impediment standing in his way—a gentlemen on the top of the steps—a dark man of refined features, long, black eyes, white teeth, a good smile, and the complexion of a Hindu. Arethune started, and with quick perspicuity his mind deduced a connection between the dark gentleman and the man he had quitted, and, characteristically alert for elucidation of what troubled him, he became active and immediate. The fat white landlord stood behind the stranger. He spoke.

"This gentleman maybe will help you." He looked with sidelong distrust at the dark man as a specimen of a specious humanity, and included Adam Arethune in the distrust as an aider and abettor of lopsided and un-English morality. "This gentleman may help you," he repeated, with his wooden hand wave and his usual rotund heel turn, which transported him indoors.

Adam looked inquisitively at the dark man, and the dark man looked at him, and came down the steps.

"The English industrial has not good manners, sir," he remarked, smiling.

"No, I apologise for the Halton exhibit. Can I do anything for you? I am an English industrial—but south country. To be concise—Lambeth commercially—Surrey domestically. My name is Arethune—at your service."

"Sir James?" queried the dark man, with his head on one side.

"Oh no. His younger brother."

"I thought some relation. The name is uncommon. I should be glad if you can give me some information, Mr Arethune."

"I will do what I can for you."

"And yet it is scarcely possible that you should be able to; for you are surely merely a visitor, and he would be surely secluded and living much alone," he communed.

"Who would?" Adam demanded, tartly, bluntly, his head running on that other.

"The man I seek."

"And who is the man you seek?"

"Tell me, Mr Arethune, have you encountered here a man of my country? I am Persian—Khan Mikayl El

Gol—attaché to the representative of His Majesty the Shah. Have you encountered a man of my country who is marked by nature's hand away and apart from us all?"

"Do you mean a man who is an albino?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"A man whose name is Ahmed and who works as a potter here?"

"Yes, yes, yes. His name is Ahmed, and in his leisure he modelled and coloured clay."

"I thought he was a Turk," remarked Adam.

"If your man is my man, he is Persian; but he has lived in Stamboul. Can you conduct me to him and earn my gratitude?"

Fortunately, and an uncommon occurrence in Halton, as Adam ran his eye over their neighbourhood, it lighted on one of the lumbering cabs of the place going at the pace of emptiness. He hailed it, and, without further word, signified by a gesture to the dark man that they had better get in.

The vehicle bumped over the shaley road in the silence of the occupants. Adam Arethune knew these men, and that, beyond what he had heard, he would learn no more from the Persian attaché until he had brought him to the object of his search. The long black eyes of his companion took in all that he saw along the route—took in, too, the external marks of his fellow traveller. Adam could see the frequent narrowed side glance of the dusky slits, but neither in word nor gesture did he betray emotion of any sort or kind. At Shadden Dippen they got out and walked, as was exigent to all voyagers over this well-scooped deposit of felspar. Halfway to the cottage, and as they came up

the Dippen, Adam saw the albino in the lane of cart tracks forming the road to the cottage. He was walking with, and leading poor old Ivory, bent double over a stick, and looking infinitely more decrepit and shaky out of doors than in.

Arethune touched the Persian's coat sleeve.

"Is that the man?" he said.

The Khan Mikayl El Gol shaded his eyes, for the afternoon sun shone in them, and watched the two men among the cart ruts, then, dropping his hand, he turned with racial exact courtesy and punctiliousness to Adam.

"Sir," he said, "you have done me and my country a service. I thank you."

Adam was not surprised, extravagant as the terms sounded in their apparent connection. In fact, he rather plumed himself on his sagacity; for had he not tacitly taken Emmett the mystery for what he was rather than for what he appeared?

The Persian stepped up on to the lane and waited until the couple turned towards him. In doing so, Ahmed's quick eye lighted on his form, and the albino stopped suddenly, dropped the old man's hand unconsciously—almost roughly—then remembered old Ivory's helplessness and took his hand through his arm again, recovered his equanimity and walked on, slowly, steadily, until he came with Mary's father abreast of the seeker.

"Ey kardashim! Bak ghyunesh!"[1] the stranger exclaimed, striding straight in his path.

The albino heaved a deep sigh and stood quite still, neither speaking nor welcoming the newcomer. But Adam Arethune noted that his demeanour was royal in its condescension to the dark man—that he straightened

[1] "Brother! look up! The sun shines!"

his back and held his head high, as one who confronts a subordinate. There was a momentary pause, and Adam saw that those ash-yellow eyes swept him, and the Englishman felt that he was tacitly ostracised from their business, when Emmett the mystery turned, with old Ivory still on his arm, and made for the cottage, throwing the single syllable over his shoulder:

"Ghel!"[1]

And the stranger followed obediently, leaving Adam standing among the stunted gorse on the edge of the Dippen.

[1] "Come!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE next day Emmett the mystery had left Halton, the only person having a faint inkling of his destiny or whereabouts being Mary Ivory. He told her he was going first to London, and then across the sea; but whither she did not know.

Adam catechised her. The going of Ahmed brought him much to the cottage, for it annoyed him to be left out in the cold. He had been snubbed; and although the man might have been actually His Majesty the Shah himself, he was, supposititiously, a working potter, and the great Mr Arethune had offered him help and advancement. To drop the great Mr Arethune outside the pale of complicity in the doings of his patronee was to overlook the great Mr Arethune in the scheme of creation—an unpardonable error of judgment. Therefore, the great Mr Arethune, put on his metal, stayed on at Halton, although his business was finished and done with, to draw Ahmed's secret out of Mary Ivory. For Adam didn't believe the girl when she said she knew no more than what she told.

To draw Ahmed's secret out of Mary Ivory—and what beside? With the characteristic selfishness of his sex and the individual egoism of the man, Adam Arethune did not try to gauge the deeps of the fair soul enclosed

in that clay creature's body. He haunted her and hunted her: first, from sheer persistent pertinacity—to find out what he wanted; next, because the unfolding beauties of Mary Ivory's inner nature attracted, drew, and riveted him among the chert stones and upon the scrubby edge of Shadden Dippen. He did not think of the girl herself or of the operation of his association with a young woman whose ideas were so far ahead of her station. He only thought that she was an interesting study—that she filled his dragging time—and that she surely knew who and where Ahmed was.

As for Mary herself, she did as foolish women, looking out upon a world, which, grey and dusty in itself, time-worn and elderly, is tinged and tinctured young, possible, beautiful, and bright out of their own youth, possibility, beauty, and brilliancy, always do. Saddening reflection! Let us ashen our heads and grieve over it—musty, moss-grown, mouldering sinners as we are! *In brevito*, and in the vernacular, Mary Ivory, the pug-girl, fell idiotically in love with Adam Arethune, the introspective engineer, with strong tendencies to dandyism, an overweening and utterly misplaced pride of race, and a bias to the priesthood as a sort of condescension to the Deity, taking effect in the suppression of his extraordinary mind and the submergement of his solitary self in a system which plasters its first code of laws with the precept of implicit obedience.

Ahmed had left Halton a week, when Mary Ivory, one day slowly pacing home, sighted Thomas Anthony Horndyke coming towards her at a distance of a hundred yards or so. She pulled up short, thought, ·ided, and took the friendly refuge of a foul back street from him, dismissing him from her thoughts when

she turned the corner—thoughts mixed, it is true, but glorifying enough to lift her out of the squalid slum and carry her off on the roc's back of a golden future—all centring round a handsome young man in an eye-glass!—a graven image of egoism! She walked with her head low and a smile on her face.

"Well, Mary Ivory! What does this mean?"

She looked up, and the smile vanished. Horndyke, too, had made a circumbendibus, cutting down a kindred alley on his own part, and met her after all.

"What does what mean, sir?"

"You cut me purposely just now."

"I, sir? No, sir!"

"You. Oh yes. Psha! d'ye think I'm blind and can't see that I'm more unwelcome than ever since the coming of yon saucy puppy? But I tell you what, Molly, my girl, I'll have a quiet talk with you and come to an understanding, come hap what may on't. Tom Horndyke's no flabby fallal to be thrown aside when's worn out and done with. Ye're but a wench, lass, and a sentimental wench to the bargain, and I'd like ye to see the drift of things with a plain eye."

Mary Ivory threw up her head.

"I don't understand you, Mr Horndyke."

"Oh yes, you do. Say you won't understand me if you like. You've said it to me any time this last year. But 'tis at an end. It must be at an end. Will you take my arm and listen?"

"No, I won't—neither take your arm nor listen while you talk and behave so."

"Well then, well then, well then, I'll try and please you; but you'll own I've had enough to cross me. Molly! will you let me walk beside you and speak my mind?"

"'Tis as well you shouldn't, Mr Horndyke. You've spoken it before, and mine doesn't run with it, and I've had no cause to change it."

Thomas Anthony Horndyke's face lowered, his mouth tightened ominously, his eyebrows—promising penthouses in age—gathered in angry puckers, and his eyes sullenly sought the ground.

They were standing still speaking these things in a sharp undertone. Two or three dirty little wastrels congregated near, with open mouths and expectant, smeared faces. Thomas Anthony bent his brows on them and they edged away.

"Be off, ye young vermin!" he growled, and they slunk off, sending the cadence back on the air:

"'Tis Muster Horndyke o' Longwort'. Cum on. Un's a 'ot un!"

He looked a "'ot un," as he glared after the vanishing small fry, and brought his glare round upon Mary with an infusion of agony.

"Won't you listen to me?" he asked huskily.

"What's the use?" she said, moving on as she spoke.

"Perhaps none, wench; but I'd like to cough it up. It lays heavy on my chest. Cannot you come out into the open?"

"I will if you like," she said, a trifle wearily. That agony of hopeless passion in Thomas Anthony's furtive eyes made her tired.

They struck out of the alley, and back into the wider road, and walked together some little way in silence: she, looking low, straight before her, wishing that the distance of the incline lying between her and Shadden Dippen would diminish quicker; and he, casting side glances at her beautiful face—so cold and careless—to

nerve himself by sight of its faultless contour and spurring charm for what he was going to say. He moistened his dry lips with his tongue, and hawked to clear that mucus in his throat. He tried to frame the question in his mind, so that it should seem less sparse, stark, and uncompromising. It took on no other shape, however, and finally came out in all its concise nakedness:

"Lass, will you marry me?"

"No, Mr Horndyke. I cannot."

"'Tis the same as before?"

"Quite the same as before."

Thomas Anthony's face looked clammy and cold underneath its bristly surface. It took on a queer, shiny, moist look, as if the thickness in his throat had oozed through the skin. His hand trembled as he lifted it to his mouth and bit his nails, examining the toes of Mary Ivory's shoes with his lowered eyes.

"Look you here, lass."

"Yes, sir."

"Do not call me 'sir.' I want none of your nonsense. I'll give you a tip."

"What's that?"

"Tell yonder young —— (he called him by an ugly word) to clear out o' Halton. D'ye hear?"

Mary Ivory stopped dead, wheeled round on the pavement, and looked at him with the face and grace of a Zenobia and the eyes of a Fury.

"What do you mean? Who do you mean? How dare you call him that thing?"

He nodded his head stolidly, menacingly, and for a second's space his eyes left her boot toes and caught her own, whence they again descended to the leather.

Mary Ivory trembled. She had a quick, sharp, immediate temper. She opened her mouth as if to allow the emission of a stab of a cry. None came, for they stood in the street; but the effect was the same as if she had screamed at him.

He threw up a hand which clenched as it rose, and flung a barrier of wrath between them.

"It's up," he muttered more raucously.

"You—coward!" she hissed, and left him, walking away at a great rate.

She went ahead like a young steam-engine, clearing the incline with her long, swinging strides—slurring sweeps that carried the firmness of a masculine tread on a feminine elegance. She struck down the Dippen, stepping on anything in the bee-line of anger, and came up the slope to find Adam Arethune standing at the top watching her.

"You're in a hurry, Miss Mary," he smiled.

She staggered, caught—bayed, like Margaret, when she ran against Faust outside the church door. Adam Arethune snatched at her hand, for she nearly went backward over the edge.

"I'm awfully sorry. I frightened you! You were in a brown study. So stupid of me!"

"Thank you—thank you. No, you were not stupid. It is I—it is——"

She broke away and crossed the cart-track skirting the cottage. The nasty sound of that evil word—the nasty sense of Horndyke's hate and vengeance—the hate and vengeance of an unscrupulous, savage man—hit on her heart like the steam-hammers of those big machines yonder which had brought these two men to Halton. She was frightened, and she couldn't let the thing stop

there. She turned like a young wind and re-crossed the cart-track.

"Mr Arethune!"

"Miss Mary!"

"How long are you going to stay in Halton?"

"What a question! I don't know."

"Is there any reason for your staying in Halton at all?"

"I—don't—know."

He looked at her with the information he wanted at the back of her. Her impression of his look stopped at herself, and she did not think of the information.

"May one be forgiven if one asks why you stay in Halton, Mr Arethune, or if it will seriously affect your business if you leave?"

He reddened under a complex feeling, then answered frankly:

"Truthfully, Miss Mary, I hardly know why I stay in Halton. Candidly, my main object here is to find out something concerning that foreigner who has left us. I am impressed with the notion that you can put me on his track. I want to see him again."

"Is that the only reason you have for staying in Halton?"

He was about to answer when his eye caught hers, and he paused. It was as if some magician had flashed the mirror of his life before him, with all its concerns operating as pigmies over its surface—puny, paltry, and of no account. And the hand of the figure swept them aside and away. And the hand was this pug-girl's, and the figure was hers. Extrinsically, Adam Arethune might be a casuist. Intrinsically, he was a truthful man. So he spoke the truth:

"No—o. It is not my only reason." He looked her steadily in the eyes—those emerald eyes which he could not forget. "No. It is not my only reason. But—the other—is—private."

"Is it important enough to keep you in a place that is dangerous to you?"

"Dangerous? I don't understand!"

"No, you don't understand. That is why I am urging you to leave Halton."

"Miss Mary, I never do anything with my eyes shut. Explain yourself!"

She fidgeted with her fingers.

"I can't without making mischief. I tell you that the air of Halton is bad for you—that you have an enemy here. Can't you take my word for it without inquiring further?"

She would have taken him by the shoulders, and would have pushed him out of Halton if she could. How easily and recklessly women commit suicide when the safety of a man they love is in question!

Mr Arethune smiled again. What maggot had this wild, fanciful creature got in her head?

"My dear girl, how can that possibly be? I know no one in Halton, and I go nowhere save to this cottage to inquire after your father, and to see how you are getting on."

"That's it! that's it!" she cried in extremity, and paused, fidgeting with her hands more stormily than ever.

He began to see light.

"Oh, the danger lies in my coming to this cottage?"

She nodded, and he grasped the situation.

"The overseer is jealous?"

She nodded again with a burning face.

"What a fool he must be!"

To do him justice, he didn't think of the many-sidedness of that comment, or how it might hit this sensitive, impressible girl. She nodded again, slowly, ponderingly, as if something eviller than that word—nastier than Horndyke's anger—were growing out of her heart and penetrating her head.

"Yes," she said, with a queer lateral contraction of her mouth—"yes, we are all fools. He—for loving me; me—for speaking to you; and you—for staying in Halton. There, 'tis done! I've said my say. I can tell you nothing about the lodger more than you can tell yourself."

She, too, flung up her hand as if she would put a barrier—not of wrath—but of a broken dream—a lost illusion—between them, and again crossed the cart-track.

He felt that something was wrong. He felt smaller in his own estimation than he had ever done before. He felt that this pug-girl towered above him and despised him. Yet he knew that there was more than that in it: that her contempt was the anger of a girl who has been snubbed by a man whose opinion she values. He felt that, for the first time in his life, he had treated a woman badly. He dashed across the cart-track after her.

"Mary—Mary Ivory! you misunderstand! Don't be so impulsive! I didn't mean it as you take it. He is a fool. He's a fool for loving you—yet I don't see how he could well help it. Yet he's a fool all the same. He's a fool for expecting you to love him—yet—good God!—I suppose it would be a good thing if you could. Forgive me. You are not going to fall out with your friend."

He was talking to her back, and her hands were clutching the points of the wooden palisade at the top of the cottage garden gate. Keeping one hand on the wood, she veered round and, leaning against the gate, looked at him.

"'Tis best," she said. "Oh, Mr Arethune, things are very clear to me this day. 'Tis childish to play with fire. Go away from Halton and you'll save yourself and me much pain and trouble."

He caught the loose hand hanging at her side.

"Mary Ivory, do you suppose for a moment I'm poltroon enough to run away from Halton because Thomas Anthony Horndyke is impudent enough to think of me and himself on one issue? I could never face myself even in my shaving glass again if I did that. Tell me, what has he said to you about me?"

"He told me to bid you quit Halton."

"Really! and it frightened you? Why were you frightened, Mary? You wouldn't have rushed home at such a rate with such a scare in your head if Horndyke had chosen to be jealous of—say—Gathergold."

"Mr Horndyke is not quite a fool, although you said just now he must be one, Mr Arethune."

"Then why are you so frightened? Do you think Thomas Anthony is such a terrific adversary that I am unable to withstand him?"

He was smiling into those emerald eyes and putting the position on to his self-conceit, but that truthful ego of him knew that he was juggling with the real and that he wanted to get something else out of her.

She burst out indignantly:

"I know you're strong enough to stand against Horndyke. You're strong enough to stand against

heaven and earth—but—I—don't want that you should have to."

"Why?"

"Oh, Mr Arethune, can't you leave me be?"

She might have spoken out as those green eyes wavered, wandered, skirted the heights, moistening and twitching. She might have snatched the heart from her bosom and have dashed it on the flinty ground at his feet for his boots to trample. If she could have done so, he could not have carried the traces of her life's blood more actually on his track than he did in the mystic haunting that followed that day.

She dragged her hand away from him and, leaning against the gate, covered her face and broke into a mad whirl and tempest of sobs. It is a bad crux for a man, always, when he evokes this passion vent from a woman whose eyes are naturally dry. He is a brute if he leaves her. He may go further than he intends if he stays near her. If she be beautiful, graceful, touching and probing, with, or against his will, every susceptible contact point in his nature, she insulates his limbs and his arms enfold her—his voice soothes and his lips touch.

Ten minutes after Mary Ivory's tearful outbreak, Adam Arethune crossed the silty roll of land on the off side of the Dippen with irregular strides, as careless of impediment, as reckless of course, as she had been half an hour ago. His blood was no longer cool and self-satisfied—a lukewarm, pulsating factor of motion. It was turgid, seething, clamouring and howling in its swollen muscular channels for the thing he had despised and derided, under the pressure of Mary Ivory's beauties, and his lips were tingling and panting under Mary Ivory's kisses.

CHAPTER XIV

SIR JAMES ARETHUNE lived in solitary dignity in a high, large, gloomy house in a collection of high, large, gloomy houses near Hyde Park. Sir James was a weary-looking man. He gave one the impression of having reached the pinnacle of human ambition and striving to find nothing worthy when he got there—a diet of bladders and a city of sand. His movements were slow and deliberate, and he speculated on everything before he responded to it—either by action or speech. He was handsome, with his vigilant, far-seeing eyes—cut, like his brother Adam's, straight across the pupil by their hidden lids—but he lacked the bright, alert manner of the younger man, and he "snapped" at nobody. But then, he was twelve years older, and perhaps he had grown to know better. He looked like it.

He sat in his spacious library, turning over a letter with that characteristic facile finger and thumb one observed in both brothers. Laying the paper on his desk, his long pointed dexter marked a passage as if it had been a cubic measurement.

"What the devil does the lad mean?" he muttered.

The passage in the letter was on its face innocuous. "I wish I had never come!" Not much in that, but Sir James looked at it with a puzzled brow, and, folding

the letter in his protracted way, rose, glanced at the superscription, and spoke to the gas-fire sending its close, uncomfortable heat fumes into his room with a singing noise.

"I shouldn't have recognised this for Adam's writing. I wonder what has upset him! So touchy—so tetchy—so conclusive! I expect he has been imposed upon by this albino he speaks of and his vanity has caught light. Abnormalities are not nice to deal with."

He stooped and turned out the gas-fire, put the letter in his pocket and strolled out of the room, stopped in his hall, considered, rang for his hat and coat and went out.

He walked in long slurs which took him across Hyde Park through Knightsbridge into Chelsea without suggesting a sensation of fatigue. In his preoccupation he made for a given point as the crow flies. This was James Arethune's way: to go straight for the thing that had quickened in his consciousness to form an idea, regardless of let, hindrance, or impediment from space, person, or locality. This directness of aim and contempt for incident had made him what he was—a great engineer. Winding walks, casuistry, devious methods and crooked morals were alike strode over or kicked aside by James Arethune's firm foot and impartial judgment. He said what he meant and he meant what he said. He intended what he did and he did as he intended.

So he spoke little and he acted on deliberation, with careful determinateness and without regard to relations.

He was an erect man, save for his head, which generally hung low in introspective speculation. He raised it occasionally to sweep, with those grey, distant eyes, the

world, this planet, the solar system, the immensity of the infinite, before bringing them back to light upon the object under his feet, which, perhaps, had caused the bent head to lift out of its calculations. This happened as he turned the corner of Sloane Street and a small boy in a dirty sailor suit caught his leg with a scream of delight.

"Why, Jimmie!" cried Sir James, with a quiet smile, which improved his face wonderfully.

"Uncle!" squealed the squalid little sailor.

Sir James tipped up the grimy small face with his finger.

"Where are you going?"

"Get dad's 'bacca."

"Tobacco—Jimmie—tobacco. Try to call things by their right names. 'Tis the first step to seeing them in their right light. How old are you? I forget."

"Four. Lulu's sick wiv her teef. Mummie's bin up all night wiv her. Dandie and Brue gone out, so I had to come get dad's to-bac-cer."

"Why couldn't dad come and get his own tobacco, instead of risking your little limbs in this traffic?"

This query was beyond Jimmie. He trotted along beside Sir James, holding on to a finger with his plump little pud, and trying to make at least three of his strides fit inside one of his uncle's.

"This is the to-bak-ker shop," he sang up presently.

"Come along, then. We'll get your father enough to prevent your being sent out into this crowded road for a week or two by yourself. Ned's the incarnation of selfishness!" This was muttered to himself before he bought sufficient tobacco to make a tidy-sized parcel for Master Jimmie to carry.

The Clay Creatures

They then crossed the road, and after walking some little distance—Sir James preoccupied and Jimmie trotting in pride of possession in so much "to-bak-ker"—they turned into a frowsy, deteriorated square on the river side of the King's Road—a woebegone spectre of departed respectability. Its narrow run-up houses had been at one time the detached abodes of reputable tenants, but their reduction to the penal condition of tenements had made them bond to the parasites of divided domesticity—men who live on their wits; women who live on their looks; broken men who skulk from their creditors; women who make them wherever they can, and then fly to other lairs of divided domesticity. Area windows with aggressive bills and manifestations of the ability of the tenants to mangle or cobble, to clean gloves and feathers, with more than one interesting announcement urging upon the public the services of a lady whose assistance is necessary as the portal of existence: an office which, judging from the number of infants of all ages staggering over the pavements and sprawling in the gutter, was no sinecure in the neighbourhood of this dilapidated square.

Sir James Arethune remarked none of these things. They had become habits. He walked straight to the last house in the square, and, sending Jimmie before him, entered its always open door and ascended its oil-clothed stairs up two stories, until he reached a badly-hung door fitted for convenience into a temporary lath wall in order to divide the house into so-called flats.

This door was open, and Jimmie ran upstairs, squeezed past a mail-cart filling up the landing, and ran into the room at the top of the steps.

"Mummie, mummie, here's Uncle Jim!"

There was an exclamation, a quick step, and a lady came to the stairhead.

"Oh James, I'm glad you've come!" and she held out her hand and he stooped to kiss her cheek.

Joan Arethune was nearly thirty, and in her early youth had been accounted very lovely. Tall, slight, elastic in step and motion, golden and flower-like: one of those women who carry the aura of perennial youth about with them, who are loved by the men in batches, and who are regarded by the women with suspicion and often jealous enmity in these days, whose markets of civilisation!—save the mark!—set man on the one side of the counter as the trader, and woman on the other as the article of commerce. Ten years ago Joan Arethune had been put up for auction in the sale rooms of sexual barter by a wary and business-like merchant mother. She had been made to show her paces at concerts, balls, theatres, and the like, and had fallen a victim to the good manners, handsome face, and, in those days, decent income of Edward Arethune, the cousin to the great engineer.

"It would have been better if it had been the great engineer himself," Mrs Maynard, Joan's mother, had plaintively observed; but girls are so wayward, and, furthermore, Sir James Arethune was in America, mixed up in a steel trust—standing alone, a bulwark representative of the world's trade against Wall Street monopoly and a cornering scandal. He might be abroad for years, and the settling of Joan was an urgent matter. Edward's income was fairly good, his prospects as an architect bright enough, and a bird in the hand—— Mrs Maynard decided upon Mr Arethune, and, like many a more experienced and wiser politician,

she lived to regret the measure. For Edward Arethune's excellence, being taken on his own recognisances by the world at large and his mother-in-law, turned out no exception to the rule of such advertisements. His business had been left to him by a hard-working father —more thrifty than careful—a man who saved that his son might spend—a man who liked to think of his son as among the brazen pots, and who felt proud when he heard the lad spoken of by the clerical instructors of youth as a pious, God-fearing young man. Truth to tell, Edward had but one fault. But it is the rabid sea monster that swallows up all lesser fry. It is the extinguisher of the light of the world. It is the juggernauth smashing all good intent beneath its lumpy wheels. And it is scarcely counted a fault—perhaps because it is the nurse's lap out of which all vices spring—the fount at which all evil sucks and thrives.

Edward Arethune was incurably and radically lazy. He would do nothing that he could get someone else to do for him. No further explanation is needed for the fact that poor Mrs Maynard died of sheer vexation and worry five years after his marriage to her daughter, and that, ten years after this marriage, Sir James Arethune had to climb to the top of a shabby tenement house in the poor quarter of Chelsea to find the beautiful Joan Arethune's face aged and scored with lines of care and strife, weary-eyed and watchful, friendless and braving the world for her husband and four children.

The quick, youthful gait, the indomitable energy that gives that impress of youth to some folk, showed vital and strong beneath her anxious face and in her light step. A little ease and lack of strain would make Joan lovelier than ever, and there was a sore feeling of resent-

ment in James Arethune's heart and a touch of rebuke in his voice as he greeted his cousin's wife.

"Jimmie tells me Lulu is ill."

"She is: very ill. I'm afraid—I'm afraid——" She broke from him with a quivering lip and ran into a dusty, well-worn, well-used little room through a folding door to another larger, as dusty, as well-used and as worn, where a man sat supine and listless in its only armchair, and a child lay in a cot, breathing hard and quick in the restless sleep of lung trouble.

"Have you got a doctor?" whispered Sir James.

Joan nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

"What does he say?"

Joan shook her head, her lip quivered, and she covered her face with her hands. She was a brave, strong nature, and she didn't like to be seen crying. She was like a man, and she turned away to hide the mother's grief in a corner of the frowsy room.

James Arethune bit his lip and looked round at the man in the chair, and a queer contraction caught his throat and scored a line on his forehead.

"Edward Arethune," he muttered suddenly, but deliberately, as if he was following up a thought that had been in his mind some time, "why do you get these children to let them die like this? Why do you have them, if you can't and never intend to keep them?"

The man in the chair looked up with lack-lustre eyes. He had a set of rosary beads round his fingers, and a prayer-book open at the Psalms of David on his knee.

"What do you mean, James?" he said. "How can I prevent the doings of God? The Lord gives. The Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"It's rank blasphemy! I tell you, the God around

whose neck you'd hang such things as these"—indicating the beads and book—"is an idol as senseless and soulless as Baal. It is you—you—you who do these things. In sanctified lust you bring these children into the world. In vicious indolence you let Joan fret her life out and them starve, fall, and die like this baby is dying; and while it is dying, you send its brother for your tobacco, and put it all down to the will of God, and pray here in this pokey hole, while you should be tramping London to find work. You lazy devil, Edward Arethune! you ought to be ashamed of yourself—filling your helpless, useless hands full of the frills of religion and thinking you can shelve your paramount duty and call."

Edward Arethune straightened himself in his chair, glanced round to see that his wife was not within hearing, and shut the Psalms of David with an air of authority.

"James, I will ask you not to bring your liberal notions here. I am always glad to see you——"

"Humph!" interpolated James, for Edward Arethune's eyes had unconsciously travelled from his face to his breast pocket.

"—I am always glad to see you, but I cannot have your strange opinions—many of which are lamentably unorthodox—one might almost say heretical—aired here. Marriage is our safeguard from sin, and it might be well if you yourself were not a bachelor."

James Arethune's face flushed. Something in the last remark had touched him. But the colour faded, and he passed it over.

"Marriage is our safeguard from sin—only. Yes, that is the folly of it. That, I know, is our teaching. And

so, marriage has been degraded into a licence by which we can use a good woman worse than we would a prostitute, and turn her into a machine by which we bring children into the world. That is the opinion of marriage held by many of you devotees, Edward, and it is the common ecclesiastical idea; but I am a bachelor because I don't agree with it, and I think marriage should be based on a difference."

"You are Protestant in your views, James—a renegade. You approve of divorce."

"No, I don't. As its laws stand it is sex traffic. It breeds race suicide. And we men are responsible for it all. It is our indolence and shiftlessness that deteriorates the plastic possible woman into the wanton and the shrew. Look here,"—he pointed to the cot—"look there,"—he pointed out of the window, where the dirty pavements swarmed with dirtier childhood—"what woman with an atom of the intrinsic feminine logic in her head would not shrink from bringing children into the world for this or that?"

"Women have no logic. They were never intended to have," said Edward Arethune.

James smiled cynically.

"It is strange how close the ideas of an exemplary Christian, who is too slothful to think for himself, come to those of the devout Mussulman regarding women. In fact, they are more so, for I have known some Mussulmans who would put the majority of Christian husbands to shame in their treatment and opinions of women. Poor baby!"

He looked down at the child struggling to breathe, fighting with its puny, wasted power against the hardening demon of pneumonia. James turned on his heel and

sought Joan, standing in the dinginess of the back room, dry-eyed and weary.

"Look here, my dear," he whispered, "you said you wouldn't take it; but you must. Lulu wasn't ill then; and it's your duty."

She dropped her head.

"I'm afraid my pride must be brought very low, James," she said. "I've only got a shred or so left, and you are frittering those away."

"Not I, my dear—circumstances."

"Maybe. Ned says people ought to keep him when he can't keep himself, that he gives them an opportunity for exercising their charity. But I don't like being an object of charity. When people help you, they think they can say anything to you. You know Mrs Privilege?"

"Yes, I have met her."

"She came here yesterday, and gave me half a sovereign and a cast dress, and she told me she considered me a wicked woman for not preventing myself having these children. How can I help it?"

"You can't. Mrs Privilege is a fine one to talk. She is running her own daughter into the arms of a duke's younger son, with a vile reputation and notoriously three establishments already. I don't suppose she will ever be a grandmother. His lordship is too cosmopolitan in his attentions. You should have prevented yourself having Edward. He makes me tired. He reads his duty in such a lopsided way. See! this will settle the doctor, and I'll come over to-morrow. Joan don't take on so. I hate to see you in such trouble."

She had let her head fall on to her folded arms on the table, and she nodded it while she cried quietly in little sobbing gulps, and without demonstration. He pushed

the money into her hand, and let his fingers rest on her hair, and slide down to her neck. His touch seemed to rouse her. She raised her head.

"Thank you, dear, thank you. 'Tis all I can say."

"'Tis all I want you to say. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, James, good-bye."

And he went downstairs, and left the woman to her sorrow.

CHAPTER XV

THE next day a letter came to Sir James.

"DEAR COUSIN,—My child was called to His kingdom this morning. Let us, in our grief, give thanks that there is another angel in heaven to intercede for us. The expenses are very heavy. I had hoped to get Wall and Mason's contract, but, as you know, I have been disappointed. Can you help me? Your opinions are too elastic for your salvation, I am afraid, my dear James, but I have the greatest respect and affection for you. You twit me with inertness. I don't think I deserve it. I am writing to Wall and Mason to remind them of their Christian duty to one who is in distress. I have asked for an advance, and I have shown them that the death of my child lies at their door. If they had given me the contract it wouldn't have happened, and yet I suppose it was her time to go; she has been sickly from birth. I am writing to everybody I can think of to help me, and of course I count upon you. Will you please, when you next write to your good brother, let him know of this profound misfortune which has fallen on me and bespeak his efficacious prayers.—Yours,

"EDWARD ARETHUNE."

James Arethune crushed this letter in his hand and

pictured the man writing it: seated at his desk in that shabby menage, with the dead child lying on a table, her little brothers hushed, silent, too awe-stricken to weep; shaping his characters so carefully, choosing his words so nicely, rounding his sentences so rhetorically—always—always—ME.

"I have asked for an advance to bury my child!" And if the advancer had approached him with the offer of a hard-working appointment, Edward Arethune would have leaned back in his chair with his fingers formed in an arch, and would have inquired: "What are the emoluments you offer? and what is my position to be? I have done so—and so—and so—and Messrs So—and So—and So—regarded me—before their bankruptcy—as the head of their firm. In fact, Messrs So—and So—and So—have spoiled me for small and subordinate work. Is the post you offer me that of—er—entire control? If not—hum——" And the "hum" would drive the friendly advancer to fresh pastures, where the calves didn't want their fodder stacked and garnered for them, but were content to pull it for themselves. And meanwhile Joan worried and strove, growing older and wearier every day, with a rebellious woman's heart in her breast and the rebellious woman's nature revolting daily and hourly against that constantly prosed "duty of submission" which she met on all sides. Slavery, suicide, burial! The self-righteous creature at her side was a slow murderer, and she well knew that if his indolence and egotism attained its sure end, he would stand by her coffin as he stood by her child's, and say that "His darling had left him, but he must not repine, for a fresh angel stood before the throne of the Lord," and he would weep for his loss and people

would comfort the saintly but unfortunate man. All but one and Joan Arethune knew that that one would tell him the truth as ruthlessly as he now crushed his letter between his fingers, and as plainly as he made out the liberal cheque which he sent, "with all loving sympathy," to *her*.

Two years before the death of this child, James Arethune had returned to England and met Joan for the first time, and, as is usual with such natures, her griefs and trials had grown into his life as a component woof of its texture. Gradually and slowly—the deeper for the drag—Joan's ways became his ways. He thought for her and with her, and it was through her eyes that Edward Arethune stood out to his consciousness in all the distortion of the devout egoist. It is strange that clear-sighted women who try to do their duty as it is represented to them by conventional tradition invariably succeed in showing up the faults of the exactor of that duty to those who are clear-sighted like themselves. It is as if the man went bail for the truth on the woman's defence, and she could produce it at trial to his shame and debasement, even though he sits as appellant and pleader.

He seldom thought that he loved her with the man's love that would have been accounted an impudent sin by the ritualist who ground her youth, beauty, and talents on the wheels of his selfishness. He knew that he did love her, but he seldom thought about it. It had become part of his life, associating itself with his business, allotting its place with those problems in mechanics which fed his brains and made him famous. If he thought of happiness, he thought of Joan. If he thought of the life domestic, he thought of Joan. Meanwhile, his

greatest pleasure was to ameliorate her discomforts. He never thought, either, how much he owed to Joan. Like all men whose heads are absorbed in the science of mechanics, James had been in great danger of becoming demoralised into a human dynamo, detached, misanthropic, with the great side of his man's nature shrivelling into a smattering of texts, rules, and tactile crudities. Joan came and saved him from tumbling into a pit of selfish exclusiveness as void and deplorable as the egoism of her husband. Seeing his cousin through her eyes, he saw the rest of the world also, and a hard, uncompromising habit of judgment, an exact logic of morality, which had been a resultant habit of his lonely life, softened, often halted in its conditions, became intensive and palliative under Joan Arethune's gentle, womanly, and acute view of things. He never tried to find out if she cared for him. He took her as she let herself be taken. He was a gentleman in thought, and he was an electrician, and he fully knew the deadly fatality of establishing a current. If a single man loves a married woman and keeps silence — well, he may be a hero. If a single man loves a married woman and tells her so, well — it depends on your accepted canons of ethics how you judge him and what you make of him.

James Arethune wouldn't have cared how you judged him or what you made of him. He kept silence because he knew that if he spoke his speech would have been Joan's bitterest sorrow in a cup of gall and wormwood; that his speech would have brought her into greater perplexities and difficulties than any of the shifts and contrivances which hampered her life now. So he held his tongue and went to the funeral of her little

child with cousinly consolation, a cousinly hand-shake, and a cousinly cheek kiss.

The funeral over, he spoke to her.

"I want to talk to you, my dear, seriously, without interruption. It isn't possible here. Can you come over to Lancaster Gate to-morrow? Can you get out?"

"I'll see," she said. "Edward doesn't like me going out for long alone. But—I'll ask Mrs Cator downstairs if she'll let the children play with hers, and if she will, I'll come. The children worry Edward, you know."

She said it apologetically, as if it were an accepted natural condition that man should be responsible for the children, then find them terribly in his way.

"I expect you," said James decidedly. "If Mrs Cator can't take them, let them stay with their father. It's the right thing to do, Joan. It's as well he should find out what they're like. Little children are the differential calculus of existence. One works the sum of life and the man on the base of the hour and the child."

She went to Lancaster Gate the next day, and told him she had left the boys with their father. She looked pretty and frail in her mourning, and her eyes were dull and red with the tears that had come after the strain which kept them dry and burning had passed. She would miss the little dead girl more as time went on. Now she looked like a woman who had passed through the fire.

James took her hand, kissed her cheek with his chilly touch that told so little, and settled her in his own chair.

"My dear, I have a proposal to make."

"Yes."

"You know I am supposed to be rich?"

"Only supposed to be, James?"

"Well, yes, because folks don't know whether I am or not. I don't tell them. At any rate, I'm rich enough for what I want to do. I could have done without asking you, but you're such a funny little woman. Joan, I want to lift it a bit. I am going to buy you an annuity."

"What for?"

"To pay your way. You're living on charity, Joan. Edward does nothing if he can help it. You're his wife, it's true; but he treats you as if you were bought and not paid for—I don't believe he ever paid for anything in his lifetime until he was county-courted for it. You can't even get an afternoon off without asking his permission. Do you know any domestic servant who would put up with that?"

"The servants often have better times than the wives, Jim," she said.

It wasn't often she called him "Jim," and he liked it. He smiled.

"Well, if you have your own income, you can defy Mrs Privilege with her cast clothes and her munificence, and you can be a little independent. Besides, I should like it for my own sake—for blood's blood, you know, Joan, and it's just as well to consider these things."

She saw through that, and smiled wanly in her turn. It was a great offer—a splendid prospective. But ought she to take it?—even though he put it on these last grounds. She was too wretched to feel really grateful. She knew, too, that in helping her thus, he would be pleasing himself. She knew, too, that if she accepted his offer it would place her in a dubious position with the precise dogmatist at home. She did not grow red, or flurried, or flustered. She tapped her foot on the carpet.

"It is very good of you, Jim. But why don't you offer it to Edward?"

"I would rather offer it to you."

"Has Edward offended you?"

"Edward Arethune is a standing offence to me."

"Why?" She didn't ask it in surprise. She asked it softly, thoughtfully, with her eyes on the singing gas-fire.

"He is a disgrace to the family. He is a disgrace to me. Will you do as I ask?"

"Edward is——" she began in woman's extenuation, loyal to the man who was absent, and who, if he had been present, would have given her lip service, and would have made her carry his coat, as he thrust his responsibilities on her. James raised his hand.

"I know what Edward is, and I know what he is not. You encourage him at home. You excuse him abroad. You are at his beck and pleasure all your life, Joan—and you know what he is. He is your cross and dereliction—isn't he? If he had married a virago, a slattern, a shrew, a fine lady church-trotter, without a shred of conscience about her, who gadded to missions and into society like Mrs Privilege and her friends, they'd have slithered into the slime of degradation together. As it is, you've kept him floating somehow. You bear the blame and you carry the shame. It's your conception of your duty, and—I suppose—it's right. I give it grudgingly, Joan; for, frankly, I'd like to tell you I think you are wrong—but I can't. I suppose it's right. Will you do as I ask?"

If she saw what was at the back of his head, she gave no sign. Mark the difference between the state objective and the state subjective in woman! Less than a week previous, a woman had thrown her heart at the

feet of this man's brother in unsophisticated abandonment and immediate fear for his safety. Joan Arethune could not well misconstrue the thrill which underlay the brusque tones of her husband's cousin. The depth and truth of his feeling for her—the strong heart of him gave that forced concession to her way an unmistakable significance; yet, she looked at the gas-fire without twitching a muscle or quickening a pulse, and her fingers lay flaccidly intertwined in her lap, while she thought out the justification for taking an offer of money which would lift her troubles. She knew that he liked her—perhaps better than he should for his peace of mind. Sometimes she wished—when she let herself wish—that the "Great Engineer" had not been in America years ago, when his cousin was on the ground to captivate her mother and herself by a brilliant exterior and a ready tongue. Girls do such silly things when a bias and consensus of opinion drive them! Why can't they be patient and wait? Surely the impulsive act drives them into that dreary college of experience where Patience sits enthroned Pontifex maximus over a congregation of sighs and regrets and "If I had only knowns." Poor Joan had been sitting under this prefect of life's curriculum for many a year, and debts, duns, shifts, and pain had shrivelled love and romance into shadowy, sterile things. There were so many bills waiting to be paid, so much rent owing, so many little things wanting for the children, and Edward couldn't go about to see people on business unless he were decently dressed. He wouldn't, because he said people always looked at one's clothes, and his were so shabby that he scarcely liked appearing at the funeral yesterday. Joan thought of an incident that had occurred a week or two back, when

James had offered her money. She refused because she saw that thing then—heard that certain thrill in his voice, and thought it better to refuse. He had not come again, and Lulu had died. Would the money have saved Lulu? And was she right to refuse? It would give him pleasure. It would give her ease. She brought her quiet hazel eyes away from the gas-fire and spoke in her gentle, unchanging way:

"I'll do as you ask, Jim dear, taking it just as you mean it and with all my gratitude."

She could not defend his cousin. She could not say he misjudged him. She knew that two people in the world had reason to appraise Edward Arethune on his deserts. She thought it best to let things be and trust to the event and what armour it would give her. She rose to go.

"I must get back, dear," she said. "I wish I could say all I feel, James, but I'm not a gushing woman; yet it is no less, and you must fill it all in yourself."

Poor man and woman! They knew they would have to fill it all in themselves in the silent life, if they would keep to the rectitude of convention. So they shook hands with that icy cheek kiss and parted.

James Arethune came down to his desk after seeing Joan go down the steps of his house and wrote to his lawyer to obtain her alleviation from want with as little delay as possible. The letter written, he rang his bell, and the door opened—not to admit his servant. His brother Adam came into the room.

CHAPTER XVI

JAMES looked up with the letter extended in his hand.

"Why, young un," he cried, "when did you turn in?"

"I have just come," answered Adam; "caught the 10.25. Can I have something to eat? I've had no lunch."

"Of course. Walmsley will answer the bell, I suppose, in a minute. I want this letter to go at once."

"Who's it to?" The question was not inquisitive. It was something to say and the thing that came uppermost.

"Joan."

"Oh ay. Poor Joan! Very sudden, wasn't it? When he wrote to me he didn't say the kiddie was ill."

"Very sudden. Three days, I think."

"Hard on them—their only girl. However, I suppose he'll soon make up for it."

"The beggar!"

"Yes, that's just where it is. He is such a beggar."

Walmsley came into the room and took the letter, and Adam looked at his brother. There was a note in the tone of that "beggar" which blended with a new idea in Adam Arethune's mind. When the man had gone out of the room, James and Adam fronted each other.

The handsome, haughty face of the younger man,

with its detached conservative expression, which his brother was wont to look upon, had changed into the face of a man who had been humbled and broken on his own weakness—the detached conservative expression was wanting. It had died and given place to harassed, dissatisfied eye-lines and mouth puckers of discontent of surroundings and egoistic failure.

The handsome, taciturn face of the elder man had lost its equally detached conservative expression. The fibres of his heart were being torn by the sorrows of a woman, whom, in his habit of detachment and the pride of exclusiveness that disdains guard, and so is folly, he had allowed to enter therein; and as no man can bear emotional stress as secretly as woman, lines of battle sympathy and resentment against existing things plainly showed in the lips that quivered before they set, and the eyes that flashed before they veiled under an acquired inscrutability, while the strength of these feelings was expressed in that one word directed against the indolent author of those same existing things.

They spoke simultaneously:

"What has hipped you?"

Then they laughed, but constrainedly. They both thought they had lived too long together. It is an ill thing when a man has studied, by force of contiguity, the face of a relation or friend so intimately that after a fortnight's absence he sees a change in it.

James answered frankly enough, pulling his moustache and looking out of the window.

"I am bothered about Joan."

"Ah! not about Edward?"

"I've no patience with Edward."

"Ah!"

James wheeled round.

"What the devil!—why do you say 'ah' like an ancient mechanical jackass? What is the matter with you?"

"The railway journey," replied Adam brusquely, "and I'm hungry, and you were in such a pother about that letter that I forgot to tell Walmsley to get me something to eat."

He pressed the bell-button as he spoke, and went out of the room, speaking over his shoulder to James:

"Tell him to give me a snack, will you?—there's a good fellow, and when we meet again you'll find me a charming companion. Hunger, dirt, and that infernal train put me out of sorts—while, if you'd only seen the hole I hail from, you'd wonder that I'm sane."

He decamped, inwardly anathematising the sharp eyes of his brother James, and his brother James stood upon the hearthrug awaiting the coming of Walmsley and inwardly anathematised the sharp eyes of his brother Adam.

By tacit mutual consent they avoided each other until dinner time, when they met under the guardian supervision of the waiting Walmsley. This gave James time to study the alteration which a fortnight's absence had made in his brother. And it certainly existed. Nor was it imaginary; nor could it be accounted for by those excuses Adam had thrown to him as he went out of the room a while back. There was distinctly some fresh thing there, and some old thing lacking. James Arethune's twelve years' seniority gave him an almost paternal holding over Adam. In association with one other person he had been the young man's guide, philosopher, and friend: in as far as anyone could mould and

direct such a character as Adam's. Every young man at five-and-twenty is a disciple of John Stuart Mill, inasmuch as he is experiential. That is to say, he draws his mental sustenance from outside. It is only when age, with its equerries of sorrow, disappointment, doubt, and death creeps upon us and shuts out those things outside by showing them to be monsters of error and phantoms of a vain illusion that we climb out of and away from the strong common sense of the English metaphysician and become German in our self-consciousness and intuitional in our laws of the nature of things. At twenty we think through other people's spectacles, and apparently see daylight and our way. At forty we peer through our own into the gloom and murk of a road peopled in shadows.

Sir James Arethune and his brother's Roman correspondent had so far lent their binoculars to Adam, and, so far, the result had been a most respectable and gratifying, precise and neatly-laid-out plan of life fitting his conception of himself to a nicety. The world was a blundering, foolish sort of place, full of vanity and vexation of spirit. God and heaven were things to be won out of and away from this terrestrial mass of mistakes by that pride of humility which only could efface itself and attain. He was handsome, talented, quick-witted, equipped for progress in every way. These things should be suppressed as snares and earnests of damnation: set aside and made light of as devilish decoys to attract the frivolous regards of that immortal and persistent enemy to isolation and proud humility—woman. The spectacles of Adam's Roman correspondent showed these things very clearly to his young friend. James's were not so good. They smudged and blurred much of

our conceived and conventional moral dogma to himself. Unconsciously he was gradually laying them aside. It was because his mind, slowly working out of its mechanical calculations to things beyond mechanics, began dimly to see nature as she intended herself to be seen, that he felt a change in his brother.

It was the shifting, too, of that precise and carefully arranged scheme of the universe in Adam's mind—the shifting and clouding of it by the hand of a pug-girl out of a north country pottery, that quickened his instinct and sharpened his sight about James.

Look you, Eve needn't give the fruit of the tree of knowledge to Adam. She only shakes the branch and he plucks and gnaws the apple of the real for himself.

The dinner was a silent meal, but when Walmsley had disappeared and the two men were left alone with that powerful protest against taciturnity—tobacco—James spoke:

"What did you find yonder?"

It was a simple query, but it sounded to Adam peculiarly comprehensive—transcendental in its esoteric meaning. If he had answered as the truthful ego of him prompted, he would unhesitatingly have said:

"Mary Ivory."

However, the truthful ego hadn't any more of its way with Adam Arethune than with other men, so he laboured to remember what beside Mary Ivory he had found in Halton, and with a superficial and almost febrile brilliancy he recounted his experiences with much the same straining after face effect and small wit that spoils and belittles the column of a halfpenny newspaper reporter.

James quietly blew aside these accounts with the

smoke from his cigar, whether they were the performances of the tiger teeth, Horndyke, the Gathergolds, depreciation of the houses, roads, vehicles, and municipal management of Halton, complaints against its dearth of amusement, its conventicles, chapels, and meeting-houses, its dirt and æsthetic desolation, the workpeople or hands, its innkeepers, servants, clergy, or inhabitants generally. He was interested in the albino; but Adam had apparently grown disgusted with the Asiatic enigma and everything connected with him. He refused to pursue the subject of Emmett the mystery.

"He was a fraud," he said, with a specious frankness. "He left Halton while I was there, and nobody knows where he went, or anything about him."

"You told me he had left Halton, and you said you wanted to stay to find where he had gone."

"I did. I remember. And I couldn't. His landlord was a half-daft old man, and his landlord's daughter——"

"Yes?"

"Couldn't or wouldn't tell me."

"Was she half-daft too? Is she the interesting girl you spoke of—in connection with this marvellous potter?"

"Yes. She is rather a superior sort of young woman. I recommended her to quit the potteries, and try and get a situation as pupil teacher or something of that sort. She spoke of going into domestic service—after her father's death. The poor old chap can't last long. He has been practically killed by the Oldham chemical works. I thought that, perhaps, she might do for Joan. By the way, you said you were bothered about Joan. Why?"

"I couldn't see their way."

"You couldn't? Can you now?"

"Better."

"Why is that?"

"Because she will let me help her—she wouldn't before."

"You needn't have troubled to ask her. Edward has no scruple."

"I have. I don't choose to help Edward."

"Isn't it the same thing—helping Joan?"

"I daresay. But it isn't the same thing to me."

"Jim!"

"Well?"

"That's bad."

"Stuff!"

"No—but—really—I think—you ought to have included Edward."

"I haven't asked for your opinion, young un."

"I know you haven't, therefore you should be commensurately grateful to me for giving it you gratis. You are getting over-sweet on Joan."

"I'm as sweet on Joan Arethune as you are on that—that—what did you call her?—that superior pug-girl from Halton-on-the-Heights."

Adam dropped a cigarette, and when he came up after fishing for it, his face was flushed with the exertion.

"Humph!" he muttered viciously. Then he got up to find some matches, or an excuse for moving. Then he spoke off the impulse: "If that's so, all I can say is, James Arethune, you're in a bad case, and you'll figure in a bad case presently if you don't take care."

James rose also and looked at his brother.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. I'll tell your fortune, Jim. If you let yourself go fooling round Joan Arethune,

allowing her money and that sort of thing, Edward will find it out—he's sure to. He'll make a row; he'll divorce Joan; he'll make you co-respondent; he'll run you in for thick damages, and he'll pose as a domestic martyr. You see if he doesn't. Take my tip, Jim! Cut it, or deal directly with Ted—it's safest."

"Adam, do you know what you are implying?"

"Yes."

Adam suddenly veered round and laid his hand heavily on his brother's shoulder. This "fortune" had been told in a mock, bantering way: the subject of Joan treated in a half-jocose fashion. Now his face carried a strange and old gravity, which altered it so that his brother could only listen, and his hand pressed James's shoulder with emphatic meaning.

"I know what I'm implying, Jim, and I know what I'm saying. You mean all that is well now. She is a pattern of all the domestic virtues and patiences and duties, and so forth. She's a splendid little woman, and you've no business to drag her into trouble. Oh, you mean well, I know. You mean just the right thing. You despise Ted. And so do I. He ought to be a South Sea islander, living on banyans and begetting little blacks who could run about naked and pick up their living out of the pregnant soil. But he's her husband, Jim. You're a healthy, strong chap, and she's a lovely, attractive woman—and—and—the spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak. Good night, old man. I'm going to write to Ganersh."

CHAPTER XVII

HE went to his room and wrote to Ganersh—his Roman correspondent. And the letter was something akin to a confession. What he wouldn't tell his brother, whose human, manly, and sympathetic side was uppermost, and bade fair to keep uppermost, he wrote to this Roman ecclesiastic, whose enthusiastic, fanatical, and devotional side had been so long uppermost, that what in him was human, manly, and sympathetic had been long crushed and withered. It was Monsignor Horatio Ganersh who had first put the idea of the priesthood into Adam Arethune's head. His great talents ought to be consecrated to the God who gave them. He had gifts which would make a great churchman. The Church, in the form of Monsignor Ganersh, laid siege to Adam, and as, up till the time he visited the Halton overseer, his egoism and his imaginative faculty had played into its hands, the way had been easy and smooth enough. "Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And lo! Adam fell to the snare of a temptress of the potteries. He had been swept away on a whirlwind of passion with a clay creature!—he who was walking—to his own and Ganersh's arranging—up a velvet pile staircase—so to speak—straight to the golden gate of the kingdom of heaven, with a through pass for Peter franked by his

vicar on earth. What a degradation! What a fall! He flung the pen aside in the middle of his letter, and, taking his head in his hands, bowed himself to think and wrestle with this thing that had crept into his blood and wound itself round his heart. The serpent of Eden—the woman of Genesis—always the same. The woman—the woman—or worse. Could there be worse than to fall victim to this great and eternal desire of men?—to divide one's self, to lose one's individuality, one's independence, one's unity, on that horrible, bestial, maddening, beautiful, vilified, hunted love—the force of the cosmos—the life of a maggot? And to fall to the arms of a Mary Ivory! —to cling to her kisses—to let himself be lost in a delirium of delightful sensation with a—— No, there, in his room, alone before that confidential letter to Ganersh, he could not speak of her opprobriously. Her position was a freak of fortune as little deserved or of her own seeking as his own would have been if circumstance or poverty had made him a piece-work mechanic instead of the son of a fortunate father.

There, in the quiet of his own room, he let himself think of her beauty, her superiority, her possibility. He let those emerald eyes grow out of the darkness when he pressed the palms of his hands upon his own, to torment him with the strange lost look which had followed and haunted him since it had fallen on him when he told her the truth: that love was impossible between them—that he was vowed to a life where the love of woman, the sublimating, beautifying factor of existence, was repudiated, despised, and rejected: that he was celibate, and must always remain so. It was not that she was not good enough for him. She was not for him at all. He sprang up and walked his room,

thinking it out. That dreadful last meeting, when she had sought him at the miserable Halton Inn. It was last Sunday night, and for a week he had let himself be a happy fool, and had made her a happy fool too—that dreadful Sunday night, when she had begged him to take her away with him—to let her live on his love—and near him—always near him. How she had clung to him! with that beautiful, deep, sensitising voice of hers thrilling in his ears, and tugging at his heart strings: "Let me go with you." And then the ugly, silly-looking truth —the truth that made him look such a puny thing and her such a—clay creature.

She had left him with that look on her face, and he had come home with its shaft in his life.

He didn't mean it all, he knew. It was the first time he had met such a woman, and he had let himself be weak. A love that is to turn the current of a scheme of existence is not such a sudden affair as that. It was an incident. She would get over it. He must get over it. She would go back to her pug work, and perhaps, after all, marry Horndyke. He—well, he would go on as he had been going. Mary Ivory had been a temptation—and he had fallen. He sat down again to his letter to Ganersh: "Mea culpa! mea culpa! mea maxima culpa!"

After that night he kept out of James's way. There was something tiresomely perspicuous about James these days. And, almost as if he did it purposely, as a sort of payment for Adam's censorship, the elder brother watched the face and followed the movements of the younger, to his great disconcertion and discomfort. He kept out of the house as much as possible, and he stuck feverishly to his business, with the method and scrupulous

nicety which the mind, fixed on a distant objective, pays to immediate and less engrossing concerns.

This distant objective did not prevent him from remarking how often James seemed sunk in a reverie which was too subtle and dreamy to be the mental process of mechanical calculation. Adam Arethune, three weeks ago, would have taken great umbrage at this, probably would have scolded his brother roundly for such egregious folly—if the three weeks' younger Adam Arethune could have guessed its cause—scarcely likely. But the Adam Arethune who had compassed so much in the Dip of Halton looked at James with a strange mixture of feeling, and was silent.

"He's over in Chelsea," he thought. "Well, well, let be. If he isn't thinking about me, he won't bother about me."

He did think about him sufficiently to make him anxious when he saw the aptitude and fitness of Adam for their trade brought so conspicuously before him in that week of close application to business on the part of his young brother. Adam's accounts were flawless, his deductions acute and clear, his suggestions pregnant and ready, his energy untiring, and his brain seemed always capable of mastering the stiff problems that so often cropped up for elucidation and reduction in their craft.

One morning, ten days after Adam's return, James spoke to him:

"Have you still a mind to—to—follow Ganersh?"

"Yes," said Adam shortly, almost fretfully.

James sighed. He thought it a pity, and then in an afterthought, as he went away, he told himself he must be getting terribly unorthodox, for in Chelsea there

seemed a mistake, and here there seemed a mistake. Yet each case was appoved of by authorities upon which he had been taught to rely as impeccable, unimpeachable, and infallible.

Was it right that a man should bury his mental qualifications in a coenibitic system of suppression? Was it right that a clever, fair, resourceful woman should make a holocaust of herself on the earthen altar of an erotic and sanctimonious sluggard?

Walmsley came up the stairs behind him with a letter in his hand. James extended his.

"For Mr Adam, sir," said Walmsley, giving him the letter.

It was from Ganersh, and James went into the library to give it to Adam, who was there.

CHAPTER XVIII

"THERE is no time for delay, my dear friend and brother," wrote Adam's Roman correspondent. "You must come to us at once—nor ignore the call of Christ, which the soul hears not twice in a lifetime. I marvel at your grace when I hear of the way in which the Evil One has assailed you. Do you not know that it is through our weak, unstable, and radically sinful human nature that the Devil most surely wins us, and always by his satellite and instrument of human woe—a comely woman? Wrestle, my Adam, wrestle with this trial of constancy and fidelity to a glorious ideal. Think of this enchantress as she is—a common, lascivious, fleshly wench, with form and features only better than her comrades, because they are so low in the human scale. You say she is beautiful! Oh, my son, think of the rotting skull beneath the flesh that is dying while it lives. Think of the transience of these things—of the passing of women and their wiles—of the humiliation of having to admit that you have damned your immortal soul for such a mess of pottage, such a prurient devil. Fight the good fight, my valued friend and companion. Fight and conquer. It is your last spurt in the arena of the wicked and shallow world. And, above all, come to us. Come here! I have all ready, and your way

shall be made sure and swift from the mundane scene of vanity, folly, and vexation of spirit to the supermundane peace which passeth all understanding: the only pinnacle of this worthless life that is crowned by the grace and glory of God. Come, for He calls you. Do you not hear the voice of the Lord demanding the gifts He lent you for His service?—your soul and body for His army, your rhetorical talents for exhortation to His way, and your mind for His mysteries. Come, I conjure you! There is no time to waste, and God must not wait.—Yours in Christ,

"HORATIO GANERSH."

He began his letter with "Adoremus in Æternam" and ended it with "Laudate," and with this mixture of symbol, romance, sentiment, and fanatical zeal, he did his duty, to his conception of it, by the man whose friendship and future he held in value. Father Ganersh had no idea that he was playing on the emotions quite as ably, though not so naturally, as any "satellite of the Devil and instrument of woe" that ever followed the way of that human nature he condemned. He didn't think this, and if he had, he would have asserted that the end justified the means, and that to reduce or exalt a person of acute and lively imagination to a state of spiritual ecstasy—that is cephalic disease—wherein they renounced all the tangible solid duties of life to follow the shadows of dreams, evolved from cognate abnormalisms, was the snatching of a soul from perdition —its safety and passport to a celestial immortality. What he himself had been taught to regard as the Great Ideal, he imparted to his friend with a self-satisfaction that was nothing short of sublime. And Adam, im-

pressible, irresponsible in imaginative matters, chaotic in the undeveloped strength of his mental force, felt like a mediæval knight spurred to an unknown land to face an unknown foe by the exhortations of Peter the Hermit. And yet—he looked through the letter again. She was not a common, lascivious, fleshly wench! Ganersh ought not to call her so—must not think her so. How dared he say such a nasty, uncharitable thing about a woman he didn't know? If she had been so she would have settled with a collier, or a pitman, or—Horndyke. She proved herself unique by selecting him for her love. When he saw Ganersh he would put him right in his estimation of Mary Ivory. Meantime he sought James.

"Jim, I'm tired of this indecision. I shall start for Rome on Friday."

"For good?"

"I expect so. You can do very well without me, and I feel I ought to go."

"Very well, young un. If you feel like it there's nothing more to be said, and you don't want my opinion. You're quite self-willed enough to do without anybody's —except Ganersh's."

So they parted, and Adam left on Friday, and the days revolved into weeks, and the weeks into months, and the monotony of time watched and fostered the buds of human development, until half a year had gathered itself into the womb of eternity.

Part the Second: Cloud Creatures

CHAPTER I

"EH, mon! poor ould Ivory's tuk at last!"

"Is't so, lass? Oi thowt 'twere loikely, fur oi see t'blinds drawn, an's window oppen, as oi cum ower t'moss."

The speakers were Gathergold and his sister Keziah, and they discussed an event for which Halton had been looking—the death of Matthew Ivory. A sharp attack of bronchitis and a November north of England fog had left Mary Ivory alone in the world.

"Wheer's t'wench?" asked Gathergold.

"Oi left hur theer 'soide o' straiked corpse. Oi helped hur straik un and then oi left un; fur t'tell t'truth, Will mon, Molly Ivory don't seem t'care t'have a boddy wi' hur these days."

"Naw, lass! Oi doubt hur's troobled in hur moind, an' 't bean't all hur feythur, nurther."

Keziah Gathergold thrust the polished toe of her clog through a tangled bit of moss on their way and nodded her beshawled head.

"Ay, lad. Oi know. T'young deevil! Oi wish hoo'd let Oton be and takken's dandy self soom other wheer. Hur's not bin t'same lass sin' oo left."

"Hur was always too much of a leddy, Kezie. 'Tis an ill thing to bring oop a young wench loike thot wi' book learnin' in hur head an' notions."

"Eh, mon! hur book learnin' an' notions wud do all right if her wud wed wi' Horndyke. But hur cannot thole un! Hur cannot thole un!" repeated Keziah Gathergold, with the same tone of conviction with which she had impressed the fact upon Adam Arethune at the Longworthy Potteries six months ago.

The overseer and his sister passed into the yellow mist and were lost, while a wild, unkempt, and haggard figure, which must have been very close to them, though hidden from view by the fog, came to the spot on which the brother and sister had met, and, catching the track in the opposite direction, passed into the thickness over the Dippen to the Ivorys' cottage.

This was Horndyke—changed, deteriorated, aged—a man who doesn't take contradiction kindly. One seeing Horndyke this day would scarcely have recognised him, so accentuated were his defects; so absent the advantages of cleanliness and personal care.

He strode across to the cottage as if no fog had swept the earth to make the path obscure. And it was only when a grotesque figure—which might have been an evolution of the clouds—stood in his way that Thomas Anthony stopped and cursed.

But the figure laughed with an elfish shriek, flung its arms up and disappeared over the ledge of the Dippen.

Thomas Anthony crossed to the cottage door, stooped under the tiny porch, where the bright green paint was blackened and grimy, lifted the latch without knocking and entered without ceremony.

The flagged entrance room or house-place was much

the same as usual, save that where the round tartan-covered table generally stood the "straiket" corpse now reposed, covered in coarse linen, ghastly in its stillness. No gossips took up the little room—no sympathetic, garrulous friends or neighbours—only his daughter. And she sat in the wicker chair which had been his place, and looked up drearily when she heard the click of the latch. When she saw Horndyke she lowered her eyes again on to the dim fire.

"Hast come agen to worrit me, lad?" she said with a descent into the vernacular of Halton which might have surprised those who had known the Mary Ivory of six months ago.

"I'd not worry you at all, lass, if you'd give me grace," answered Horndyke, coming forward. "I come to you in sorrow, Polly, to say what I feel—as I always say it."

"I'm obliged to you," she said, with a faint return of her old manner—"I'm obliged to you. 'Tis kindly meant."

She looked at the still figure in the middle of the room, then away from it to the fire, and became oblivious.

She often did this lately, and Thomas Anthony didn't like it. She was absent and distant, not from a wish to repel him, but from sheer lassitude and mental stoppage. She became blank to surroundings, and Horndyke liked it as little as he liked the physical changes in her—the unnatural bend and lack of spring in the tall figure; the pallor of the beautiful face, so often heightened by an abnormal circle of pink in the cheek; the hollows beneath the eyes, and a general tendency to revert to careless ways of speech and action which the younger Mary Ivory had held in great contempt. She so often spoke now in the dialect of the place, and her voice had

acquired a huskiness not in its tubes before. She had gradually fallen into the lax habits of the Haltonians. She made no matter of her personal appearance, and the sacking cover for head and body in labour time now no longer gave place to the neat attire and close attention to effect which had distinguished this Venus of the clay pits.

Horndyke urged upon Keziah Gathergold the necessity for remonstrating with Mary Ivory upon this decadence. She did so, and took a snub in good part. (Mary Ivory was showing a very decided tendency to tantrums these days.) He plucked up courage, and spoke to her himself.

She shut him up in the broadest "Oton."

"Thee moind theesel', mon. 'Tis no chore o' thine. Let be!"

But there were times when she shrivelled him up as of old with her hauteur and grace. She didn't coquette with him. She never encouraged him. She showed him unmistakably that she couldn't "thole" him, as Keziah Gathergold said.

She never noticed the change in him as emphatic as in herself. His altered habits—his flashes of wild and desperate mien were lost on her. He might have been as dead as her father or as far away—as somebody else —for all the hint she gave as to interest in him or his doings.

Now he stood on the flagged floor, glaring at her with bloodshot eyes, and she dreamily probed the depths of those dying cinders, with no apparent knowledge of his presence. She neither accepted his sympathy nor flouted it. Having nodded her head with her characteristic comment, "Let be!" she lost all cognisance of the existence

of Thomas Anthony Horndyke; and it was only when the crazy door banged behind him that she vaguely wondered how long he had stood staring at her, and how often he had spoken to her in the time before he bounced out of the cottage of death in one of his fits of temper.

The funeral took place two days after. It was a gorgeous affair, conducted at the expense of the owners of the chemical works, where Matthew Ivory had lost health and capacity. These owners had allowed him in his life a pension of five shillings a week—a dole which had just covered the rent of the cottage—and now they, as they estimated it, did their duty by an old "hand," by making his obsequies a sight for Halton.

Mary Ivory wore the same black garb in which she had appeared before Adam Arethune at the fusty little Halton chapel, six months before. Keziah Gathergold had affixed a crape rosette into the hat and had tucked ubiquitous bows and folds of crape wherever she could put them upon dress and jacket. Mary didn't mind. Apparently she didn't know. If she had gone to her father's funeral in her work-day sackcloth it would have been the same. She scandalised Halton with her indifference, and after the ceremony she went home and locked the cottage door upon her lonely self—an enormity and breach of custom which finished her in the Haltonian opinion.

"Polly, lass, thee'lt have a lyke wake?" Gathergold had said.

"No," Mary Ivory had answered decidedly. "I've no money. I cannot do it, William."

"But, Polly, lass, t'folk know that Cummings's a sent thee mooney fur t'burial, and t'wake too."

"Ay, lad. I spent the burial money on father, but I sent the wake money back to Cummings, and told them, as they didn't see fit to let father have it when he was alive, 'twas an ill thing to waste it on drink and such like after his death, when 'twould do him no good, and might do the lads and lasses more harm than good. Thou'rt a kind friend, William, and Kezie's a decent lass. Dunna forget me. Good-bye."

She left him, and he heard the cottage door click after her.

"What doos t'wench mean? Dunna forget hur. God! 'tain't loikely oi should. But oi doubt hur's makking bad blood in Oton," and he walked away.

The evening of that day was grey and dreary, and a solid block of fog settled over the potteries and pits. The ugly country lying between Halton and Cluny Cut, defaced by its industrial exigencies, was enshrouded in a thick yellowish vapour.

It was about four o'clock when the cottage door opened, and Mary Ivory came out.

She walked along the edge of the Dippen with a sure foot. Fog or no fog, she would have gone her road blindfold anywhere round Halton, and she turned her back to the pottery centre, leaving Cluny Cut behind her, and walked with an air of determination in the direction which led away from working Halton, into the more natural and more beautiful country.

If the fog had not been so thick, she would have seen a man spring up from behind the thorn hedge skirting the cottage and follow her. It was Horndyke, who had not dared disturb her before, but who had bided the time when the cottage door should open and she herself come out.

He dogged her footsteps until he summoned up courage enough to come up with her.

"May one speak to thee, Mary, lass?"

The face she turned on him sent him back a pace or two, so white, broken, and woeful. It was a face he had never seen before—it was a face he never wished to see again. It flushed a dusky red when she recognised him, and she menaced him with her hand and screamed at him in a high, raucous cry, which the fog caught and deadened:

"Get away from me, Thomas Anthony Horndyke! I've no mind for talk with thee. I'll no' stay. I'll no' stay," and she walked on into the fog with her long strides.

He caught her up again.

"I tell thee, Polly, lass, I'm the only friend thou hast in Halton. Thou hast given them no drinking—no waking—and they hate thee. Bid me take care o' thee wi' them. Sure, thou'lt be rioted."

She sang out a queer, sharp laugh.

"Let 'em riot! Do you think I care for all the walking clay stacks in Halton? I'd rather face the Halton lads with sticks and stones, and murder in their hearts, maybe, than you. Go away from me. *I* hate *you*!"

His face twisted—an unsightly skewing—and he caught hold of her dress with a sound like an animal that has been struck by its owner's lash. The dress was old and ripped in his hand, and with a cry that comprehended many emotions, Mary Ivory broke away and ran into the fog.

He sprang forward, and through that yellow heaviness about him came a muffled noise of rushing water, and Horndyke threw up his arms with a hoarse shout; for a

sudden fear came upon him. The rushing water purled, he knew, over the river Hale. If he could hear it where he stood through the deadening mist, it must be close. The sound was indistinct and smothered, but the next foot he strode might be into the river. Had Mary Ivory heard the warning rushing, too, or was her state of mind more deafening than the fog, or had she——?

Horndyke risked it. A howl of distress—of prevention—of dismay—of all he felt for the woman—a cry that was a panegyric upon his own loneliness if he lost her—gurgled from his shaking lips, and he went on, to hear the cry answered by a faint scream, a splash, and a crashing of breaking reeds and crackling withy branches.

He stopped and stood shaking and shivering, as if that call for help had been a witch wand to strike him motionless into a quivering, jibbering coward. He whined her name, but he made no movement until the paralysis of terror lifted and let him go forward again with careful steps, a parchment face, and trembling hands extended into the mist, like a man playing the child's game of blind-man's buff.

Hopeless! hopeless! The pause had parted them. He found the spot on the bank where the mud slid in downward uliginous runnels, as if a form had slipped through the slime. He found the withies and water reeds broken short, rotten and hanging by their roots, uppulled by the strain. But the splashing water—worked into waves in its down rush by the weir—lapped and caught the shattered stalks, to bear them with it on its way, and seemed to mock him in its licking and its power. He called and cried and cursed the river as it rushed and eddied on, coming down over the disturbing

dam. He whimpered as his cries were caught by the fog and no sound came in reply. He plunged his arms into the water up to the shoulder. But he was no swimmer, and the river was deep, and nothing came to his groping hands—nothing met his eye but swirling patches of drift—and he scrambled up, and, heedless of the mire and surge upon his clothes, set off in a wild run back to Halton, chattering and sobbing as he went.

CHAPTER II

ON the day of old Ivory's funeral the train from London again deposited a passenger on the platform of Halton railway station. He was no stranger, for he turned into the foggy main street without hesitation and proceeded to a small and obscure eating-house, where he called for a meagre lunch and made inquiries:

First, did the waitress know Eliah Sedgrook, the crippled image-seller?

Yes, she knew him, the woman said dubiously, as if her knowledge of the cripple had best go no further.

Was he still in Halton?

She believed so. He had been hawking his little clay figures in the main street the day before.

Did she know Mr Horndyke of the Longworthy Pits?

She answered with greater alacrity and no doubt.

Oh yes, he was still in Halton, and folks were talking of the fool he was making of himself over some woman or other—one of the pottery hands. She had heard that he had been remonstrated with about it by his principals. Whether it was all the woman, the waitress couldn't say, or whether Mr Horndyke was taking to drink or bad ways, but he was sadly altered from the man he had been.

Did she know the woman?

No, she knew nothing about her. Of course Mr Horndyke was so well known in Halton, being overseer at the big pot works, and so much in request on committees for improvements that never came off—church gatherings and municipal meetings and such like. There had been a talk, about a year ago, of them making him alderman, when of course by and by he would be mayor, and the greatest person in the place. But that was before he fell so low as to get mixed up with a clay-pit woman. The quorum of urban regulation could not have anything to do with such a renegade and outcast as an overseer who allowed himself to be tangled up with a "hand." The waitress was garrulous enough concerning Thomas Anthony, whose proceedings were a public scandal, and the visitor cut her short with a shilling and a civil good day. As he was walking out into the fog, she remarked that he was a man, apparently, of early middle age, with a pallid face and preternaturally white hair.

"I wish—I almost wish I had not left her!" he muttered, as he stood in the street and hailed a cab.

Out in the country the fog was thicker and yellower, but when he had dismissed the cab, he plunged into its cloud with no diminution of certainty. He took the fields away from Halton—from the potteries—from the works and wheels. He struck into a narrow cattle track leading out into the beautiful north country—over the heights yonder, where one could still smell the amber gorse and purple heather—where, far away, warrens of underwood still let rabbits and hares burrow undisturbed—where the excavations were nature's own, and she was let to cover her wanton destruction in her own pretty way with graceful herbage and colour and pulsing life.

Away from the heavy and ill-smelling kiln smoke

which settled on the town, an old house lay near the hills, its woods and gardens, tangled and neglected sweeping and climbing up their acclivities. This old house was not the least picturesque object in this picturesque neighbourhood. Wild and solitary—lonely and desolate—succumbing to that weird hand of nature which, silently and ghostly, covers all—man and his makings—with its own obliterating luxuriance. The Grange had been empty many a day, It had been built by a misanthrope, away from human kind, in the hollow of those hills, and the descendants of the misanthrope, not having inherited his reclusiveness, and being unable to let the place, ignored it among their possessions. So it lay, uncared for and unoccupied, facing the encroachments of labour, resting against the hills like a veteran with his back against a wall.

The weed-grown path led to a ramshackle, tumble-down lodge, set inside the moss-covered, escutcheoned gate, about a quarter of a mile distant from the Grange itself. Up this path the man who had got out of the cab walked with a step as familiar with its snares and intricacies, in the way of windings, sinks, and swells, of holes formed by the collected rains, of rabbit burrows and such like, as that which had trodden the Halton main street.

At the great gate he stopped, and whistled a low, sibilant note, strange and uncanny, answered presently from within by a cry or shout, and an uncouth creature like a dog standing on its hind legs came out of the broken lodge door, and shambled round the visitor, with every evidence of delight and surprise. It was not a dog, but a man wrapped in a frieze coat many sizes too large for him. This ungainly creature pulled the other man into

the lodge with gestures of joy, and whimpers of welcome as canine in their display as his appearance. In fact, the whole antics and ways of Eliah Sedgrook reminded one of the doings of a big shaggy mongrel with soft brown eyes; and Ahmed, as he sat on the wooden stool before the image-seller's fire, soothed and fondled him, much as one would the mongrel.

"You've come back. You said you would. You've come back for me."

He spoke well, with the north-country roughness, but out of the vernacular.

"Yes, I've come. Hast thou done what I bade thee, oghlani?"

Eliah shook his shock head ferociously, and began to move his hands up and down vehemently.

"She's alone, she's alone, she's alone, master. The man with the glass eye went away *long* ago, and the old man was straiket last week, and there's been big on-doings to-day over him in the churchyard."

Ahmed rose hastily.

"Ah, poor child, and she is alone. I must go to her. Come thou with me!"

The hunchback followed with alacrity. He would have followed him anywhere.

"You'll find she's not been as good as me," he chattered childishly. "She talks like the 'Oton' folk now, with 'oo' and 'ou'. She's forgot all her lessons and she's —she's——"

Eliah Sedgrook stopped and shrugged his square shoulders up to his big ears, and flapped his large hands and laughed boisterously.

"She's—oh, such an untidy girl! She don't wear her pretty hats nor her nice frocks nor——"

"When did the man with the glass eye go away?"

"Oh, a long time ago, when everybody and everything was young; before Mary got so naughty and careless. Did he take our Mary with him and leave his own Mary behind? I don't like his Mary. She's cross and snappy, and never laughs like the girl with the stars in her face. This Mary cries, and the stars are growing dim and ugly. Hark, master, there's a rat or a weasel!"

"Hush, oghlani! Sure 'tis a distant cry—human—no rodent. Be still!"

Distant or near—how could he tell? The fog which had hidden his marked personality from the Halton eyes hid and smothered this call for help or cry of despair—whichever it might be—as effectually as indiarubber. Ahmed moved on, with bent head and stretched ear and hand that detained Eliah. The sound of the swirling Hale came gradually upon them, and as they approached it the fog seemed to lift itself out of the river and roll over the land like a living canopy of cloud. Ahmed still went on, cautiously peering into the thickness with eyes that disintegrated and dispelled its vapours, with the instincts peculiar to his abnormal condition sharpened by the danger of a fellow. His movements took on the crouching trail of a feline creature as he descended the river's bank, stepping from point to point of safe foothold in the slimy mud with a sure step, with virile glance piercing the mist for the thing he sought —a power of foot and eye impossible to his follower, who crawled behind, fearful of losing sight of his master if he let him an arm's length beyond his ken.

The water lapped up and licked Ahmed's feet, as it was even then licking the feet of that poltroon further away on its bank, and he waited, and with those

strange ashen eyes dissolved the fog until the vaporous ghosts of things thickened into substance, and he saw, and sprang with a dull splash into the river.

Eliah Sedgrook shouted in terror, and then held his peace in fear. Ahmed had told him to be still. So he waited on the bank, not able to see a hand before him—to use a common metaphor—with the fog still rising out of the water and rolling away over the land. At last the sound of strokes came to him, and the waves the swimmer sent from his strong arms splashed and spattered Eliah. Then he gave another big cry and stuffed his rough hands into his great mouth; for the albino carried a drowned woman in his right arm and struck for the bank with his left.

"Take her!" he cried, as he caught the rushes on the shore. "Wrap thy coat about her, chojuk, and bear her to the hut. 'Tis a dreary day that hath brought Miriam to the river, and surely that cry through the mist brought me to Halton upon it."

He scrambled up and shook himself, speaking with an odd quiet, and Eliah Sedgrook, bundling his frieze coat round her, took the drowned body of Mary Ivory in his arms and ran towards his hut, blubbering like a boy that has been hurt by a friend.

CHAPTER III

FROM James Arethune, Knight, to Adam Arethune, Cleric at San Martino, Rome:—

"I have taken up my pen to write this letter, my dear Adam, at least a dozen times, and each time I have laid it down and put off the task—for, candidly, it is distasteful. Yet I cannot help it, for although I believe the whole thing to be a gross exaggeration and libel, I think you ought to know it. Young men like yourself do things so much more often out of sheer unthinking folly, than from premeditated viciousness, that I cannot put the construction upon it which the man in his anger forced upon me. You were not wont to be foolish or thoughtless in such matters, and I acquit you of a predilection to vice in any shape or form. Your pride stands in your way. I hope they are not trying to crush it; for, believe me, Adam, self-respect is the conscience law. And this faculty, so strong in you, must give the lie to Horndyke's story. And remembering what you said to me about Joan on the night of your return from Halton, I cannot give credence to it, and I ask for an explanation and a refutation.

"Two days ago I went across the river to the porcelain works. It is flourishing and picking up wonderfully. We have just obtained the Huys-Chalens concession,

which should open up a good Belgian trade. In the office I found a man waiting to speak to me, and it was not until he did speak that I recognised him—grizzled, broken and old—Thomas Anthony Horndyke—the overseer from the Longworthy Potteries. I asked him if he was well, and he answered gruffly:

"'Oh ay, as well as memory will let me be. I'd like to have a gliff with you, Sir James, if you'll favour me. Not now—not now—but when you've done here and can give me your time. 'Tis no subject for idle ears.'

"He spoke huskily, and in queer detached phrases—taking breath as if he had been running. His eyes were vascular and wild, and they roamed on the ground or on the walls, though never to my face. The man had, in younger times, a dogged, furtive habit, and he used to speak in a gruff, strident laconicism, with his eyes cast down. But this was changed, and, as I have said, his language was irregular, his manner nervous, and his glance wandered with a wild lack of object rest. I thought he had been drinking, and tried to pass his request over lightly and with a business-like hurry. He laid his hand on my arm in most unaccustomed freedom:

"''Tis a matter of life and death. Oh, my God! yes—a matter which nearly concerns—the—the—Mr—Adam—Arethune.'

"He put a pause between the words of your name, as if he were bringing it out on his last breath, and his manner was so significant and so singular that I promised to let him walk with me to the Middlesex side.

"The change in Horndyke so worried me that I was about to remark upon it to the manager of the porcelain works—Maule—you recollect him. But he anticipated me and remarked upon it himself, and added, laughing,

that 'Horndyke looked like a man who had committed a murder. You go to him and clap him on the shoulder, Sir James, and he'll turn on you with just the face one would fancy a detected criminal would wear. I hope he isn't responsible for one of these undiscovered crimes which are a disgrace to our police system; because it has to give them up and not the perpetrators.'

"Maule laughed as he said it, but the thing worried me; for the man who could excite such a comment had spoken your name in connection with its cause.

"As I went through the office I called sharply to Horndyke to follow. Somehow, I wanted to get it over. I don't know why I was frightened at the man, but I admit that I was. He looked desperate, lawless, hopeless, and I was afraid of what he was going to say.

"We walked for some time in silence. I waited purposely, for I wanted to leave him to do it all himself. At last he spoke, in the same raucous, rattling voice—the voice that had been through any amount of nerve strain:

"'I'd have written it to him if I'd known where to find him. They tell me he's gone to Italy to shut himself up in a monastery or something of the sort. 'Tis pity he didn't do that before he brought such woe upon a straight-walking, decent lass.'

"He stopped and prodded at the pavement with his stick, and I turned on him.

"'Of *whom* are you speaking?'

"'Of—Mr—Adam—Arethuné—*murderer*.'

"I felt inclined to laugh, Adam. I did indeed. We were standing on the bridge in its busiest part, in the height of the traffic, and amidst the noise and bustle the word seemed to come in a little tunnel of sound

from his mouth to my ear. Its association with you was comic; yet, the man before me was in such terrible earnest, and the change in him was so terribly great, that I could not look into those bloodshot, staring eyes, or upon the veins, swollen like ropes in his forehead, or the mouth working under the shaggy, unkempt beard, and laugh. The thing seemed grotesquely horrible, and I spoke quietly—so quietly that I think it disconcerted him, for when he answered, he did it in the ghost of his old manner, with a shade of his old didacticism, and with his vascular glance bent upon the pavement.

"'Why do you call my brother that?'

"'You write to him?'

"'Sometimes.'

"'Then will you be so good as to give him a message. You can tell him that I brought it to you. Tell him that Mary Ivory drowned herself in the River Hale last Wednesday after the funeral of her father. That's all, sir.'

"'Who is Mary Ivory?'

"'He'll know.'

"'Why did she drown herself?'

"'He'll know.'

"'Was there any reason for her to drown herself—any reason connected with my brother?'

"'Mighty good reason, I should say.'

"'Had he got the girl into trouble?'

"'You want to know if he's ruined her. I say—yes. He's *murdered* her. I can't tell you if there was reason good for her drowning herself, for I haven't got a woman's eyes, and she kept us all at arm's length after he left. But he bewitched her, and she was just the fool to be taken by his gimcrack, japanned ways—his eyeglass and

his cheek. If one judged him by his assurance, one would think he was boss of the universe. He caught her, and the Hale's got her. Tell him that. If he's going to be a monk 'tis as well he should hang it round his neck with his rosary.'

"'Has there been an inquest?'

"'No. The body hasn't been found.'

"'Perhaps the woman was rescued.'

"'No chance. The fog on Wednesday was thick as slab, and she went in just below the weir. No power could save her, for no eyes but a cat's could have seen her.'

"'How do you know she went in just below the weir?'

"'She must a' done.'

"'But who says she must have done it?'

"'The coroner—the doctor—the folk who have taken up the case. The girl's cottage is close to the river—at least, it's a short walk away. The Hale runs t'other side the Dippen. It's known that she's often told the foreman's sister that when things got too thick she'd go to sleep in the water, and she's done it, for—though they didn't find her body, which, sent down by the Hale Weir into the Lune Wash, may be in the Irish Sea by this—next day, when the fog lifted, they found her little head shawl caught by the briars on the bank. 'Tis quite enough, Sir James, *I* know. The wench should have been my wench, and if that empty-headed, self-sufficient dandy hadn't come between us, she'd have wed me all right enough. But he came and——'

"Horndyke shook his clenched fist in the air, to the surprise of the passers, who turned to look at us.

"'And you tell him from me to stop in his friary all his life; for if he comes out—by God! I'll pay him.'

"He stood still for a minute, looking defiance, misery, and despair at me for that space; then, without further speech, he turned on his heel and walked away, at a speed impossible to overtake, and he had been swallowed up by the crowd before I had digested what he had said sufficiently to change my listening posture.

"This is all, Adam, and this is why I have disliked and prorogued the task of writing to you—and yet, now I am writing, I think it best to give it you as I got it—*verbatim*. I must guess that this is the girl you have alluded to so sparsely indeed, that, if I had not been the preoccupied fool I am, I should have known there was something deeper in it. I cannot give you advice, because I do not know the extent of the damage. I am sure it is not as he says. I am convinced you are not the cause of this girl's death. It isn't *that*, Adam! Horndyke called you names, and, to say truth, your surface manner might make more sapient people than this madman misunderstand you; but I have watched you from your childhood, and I know that when you give your word you'll stand by it even to your own undoing, and that if you seduced a woman under the promise that all men give as the price of the advantage, you'd stand to it through thick and thin, if the girl were a pottery wench or a princess. Therefore, I don't believe Horndyke, and I think there's a blunder somewhere. I hope —I do hope, Adam, that what you are now contemplating is not as great a blunder.

"Edward and Joan are all right. Joan looks happier and better since things ride easier. She manages to get over here sometimes to see me. When she comes she always brings one of the boys with her. Edward declines to come, because I believe he has an objection

to be 'patronised.' Our old friend, Mrs Privilege, is exceedingly anxious to find out where Joan's relief comes from. She cannot make out why the poor child is no longer dependent on her charity and cast clothes. Let me hear from you without more delay than is necessary. God bless you and help you through the burden you have taken up.

"JAMES."

CHAPTER IV

FROM Adam Arethune, Cleric in Holy Orders, San Martino, Rome—to James Arethune, Knight, Lancaster Gate, London :—

"My reply could be sent to you in three words, James: it is true. But then, you would misunderstand, and although your knowledge or ignorance cannot alter this fearful thing, yet I would rather you did not misunderstand.

"Mary Ivory and I have committed no sin. That is all. The rest is true, and I am responsible for her death and the ruin of a worthy man who loved her better than I did. I never tried to make her love me, James. But I think I was the only refined thing she had seen about her in her life, and she had the instincts of refinement. I wish I had not left her there. I wish I had brought her up to town and placed her with Joan, as the idea occurred to me. And yet—common-sense—oh, Jim, what a brutal collection of conventionalities is common-sense! What does it mean after all but a cowardly shirking of responsibility—a fear of the tattlers, gossips, and tale-bearers of the world! Acting—in leaving Halton—on the common-sense maxim that 'prevention is better than cure,' I am now compelled to carry a load of remorse which is like to alter the whole colour

of my future life. I don't fear Horndyke. Poor man! poor man! And don't you fear for me. I shall live to have the plantom of that murdered girl with me as my meed and punishment. He cannot change the Divine will, and I dare not seek to subvert the Divine wrath. Nevertheless, he has spoken a prophecy. You say in your letter he told you he had heard that I had shut myself up in a monastery. I had no intention of doing this. But I have talked to Ganersh, and I am going to the Dominican Monastery of Bologna. If such a thing can be atoned, the rest of my life must seek the atonement in supplication and submission. Farewell."

James Arethune felt a strange sadness at his heart on reading this calmly-written, pregnant letter. He could feel how the keen, enthusiastic emotions of his brother had been hit and wrenched by the news he had had to send him. James had anticipated his taking an extreme view of the case, but that it would be extreme enough to change his intentions—to thwart his ambitions—to check his progress—had not entered into James's mind. A monastery—where men shut themselves up for life—to do—nothing! James didn't like it. With Adam's brains too! With his power of excelling! his prospects! his hopes! his possibilities! The influence of Ganersh was bad, but this was worse. A secular priest has a remote chance of becoming somebody or something if he be reasonably endowed and diplomatic and unscrupulous enough to manipulate the casuistries and polities of the Vatican, which are multifold. But a religious—if he becomes a mitred abbot or general of his order—he isn't much. And if a man goes into an association under conscience, as in this case, his chance is hopeless. He

is literally lost to the world and his talents are buried in Haceldama.

James Arethune thought all this fretfully, irritably, wishing that things were not so contrary. Why had that fool of a boy done it? Why had that fool of a girl done it? Senseless, silly creatures!

In this mental trouble James turned instinctively to Joan Arethune, and came to count upon her little visits with her children as sunflecks on a stormy cloud. By and by, one afternoon, when the two little boys were teasing the sedate Mr Walmsley in an adjoining room, he told her all about it, and her womanly sympathy and characteristic optimism cheered him hugely. It was very nice to be able to talk to Joan. There is nothing like sharing one's troubles with a Joan. And James thought of that poor fellow yonder in his cell at Bologna, eating his heart out in the nightmare of the untrammelled imagination, and was sorry for him.

CHAPTER V

IN truth, James's news had operated most unhappily upon Adam. This end to that time had never entered into his speculation. Like most young men, he had really thought very little of Mary Ivory herself in the matter. He had said that prevention was better than cure, and he had fled from her. If he had stayed in Halton he could not have kept away from her—she could not have kept away from him. He shuddered there, in his self-effacement, when he thought of what the consequences of a stay at Halton would have surely been. He had surely done right to fly. Marriage with Mary Ivory was out of the question. A pug-girl from the Longworthy potteries! Superior—yes; but still—a pug-girl! Any other connection with Mary Ivory was against his principles. Adam Arethune was a young man with the courage of his opinions, and there was no trace of the deprecating false shame which makes the tone of most young men when they speak of a thing as "sin." Adam had no hesitancy about his conclusion that sexual connection with a woman who is not one's wife is a sin. But, then, what makes a woman one's wife? This woman had loved him enough to die for him. And he—if it had not been for the obstinacy or determination,

which you please, of his character—he would have loved her—to his own undoing, as James said, and to her saving. Now that she was dead he let himself go and knew that he did love her. He loved her with the solid one-life feeling which precludes and contemns the considerations of social lack on the part of its object. Whatever she had been, he would have loved her just the same provided she had still been—Mary Ivory.

"A poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree." And Adam knew that the rest of his life must be dragged on beneath the sycamore tree of remorse for a deed which seemed, at the time of its doing, wisdom, and now, in its looking back, the shaft of a murderer. He could not think it out in the seminary with James's letter lying open before him. He could only take in the fact that she was dead and that he had killed her as certainly as if he had pushed her into the water.

He learned James's letter by heart, then destroyed it and sought Ganersh.

"An event has happened which has changed my intentions," he said—"an event which has blasted my life. I dare not take up the work which you have pointed out to me. I dare not. I may not. I should be a curse upon your order. My association would bring upon you the vengeance of God, for I am responsible for a damned soul."

"How is that?" asked Ganersh with sacerdotal calmness.

"She—about whom I wrote to you—has committed suicide. It is my doing—all me."

To say truth, this rather staggered Ganersh. He had been a man of the world, which he had renounced with

such mischievous invective (for the world and its ways are but a school, and its renunciators are merely truants from their prescribed tasks), and he knew such things as this don't often happen. Ganersh was no philosopher. Had he been so, he would have been no priest. And he had not considered the reality and the intensity of a *poor* woman's feelings. As one rises in the social scale, one's emotions are put in stays, moulded and laced to emergency; and the middle-class woman keeps them on a shelf, to be displayed or stocked according to circumstances and the most desirable valuer. Her heart is a Jack's booth, and she herself a very capable auctioneer. This was the class of woman to whom Horatio Ganersh had been used. He was unable to judge of the product of untrammelled nature and truth, or to analyse the speciousness of the result of a civilisation which can accommodate to its requirements an abnormal mixture of sham and make-believe that it calls an "upper middle class." Besides, Ganersh despised women. They embody the principle of evil — have done so from the time of Eve; and Ganersh believed implicitly in the Garden of Eden, the snake and the apple, and that changeable God who revolts our understanding by not knowing what He wanted, and not being able to keep it when He got it. Ganersh had been told that woman and the Devil had been responsible for that primitive upset, and that woman and the Devil upset the fruits of the earth everywhere and everyhow.

Wherefore, he launched into a pious railing directed against this woman who had loved Adam Arethune.

But Adam Arethune stopped him.

"That'll do," he said. "Silence! You cannot under-

stand. You never will. My life must atone. Ganersh, I shall carry that drowned girl with me to my grave. I wish—oh, I wish——"

And he buried his face in his hands, and the next day he entered the novitiate of St Dominic of Bologna.

CHAPTER VI

SUCH natures as Adam Arethune's are manifold. They evolve with time, experience, and circumstance. Character is a plant, and its student watches its development with the interest of a horticulturist experimenting with an unknown vegetable—looking, perforce, to the end, observing the means, and leaving to philosophy and physics the task of explaining whether the multifarious qualities and facets of the opening mind are innate in the closed bulb, pulsing in the bud, or whether they are formed and modelled by outer association and incident.

The superficial outposts of a mind like Adam Arethune's are ideas of the imagination—elves and sprites of a dreamland which has no foundation in fact, and for that reason perhaps attracts so many votaries, who, children of time as they are, prefer the wind-blown superstructure of myth and fairy legend to the concrete basis of unvarnished truth and real beauty.

The world is full of people who live in the clouds, and Adam Arethune, until he entered the monastery of Bologna as a postulant, had been a cloud creature—his feet in the clay, and his head in the winds of the undisciplined mind.

He had hated the trade in which he excelled. Those

vile calculations, which would admit of nothing they could not reduce to rule and quantity. Surely there must be some things above algebra and mensuration. He wanted those things. He would not be a serf to measure and boundary. He wanted to serve the immeasurable and the boundless—the infinite. So, he grasped at the bubbles blown from the pipe of the enthralling mysticism of dogma, and ran onward until he fell over—an Ophelia of the clay pits, with love-lorn green eyes—dead—dead—dead—and tangled tresses, dank and matted with the river slime.

Mystical dogma hurled ban against the cause of this tragedy. Idealism condemned this realism as wicked and criminal. It bade men fight the realities of the senses which rule the realities of the world—of the universe—with the flimsy weapons of fantasies and visions evolved from the crude, aborted, diseased conceptions of fanatics and misanthropists.

And he bowed his head and tried to atone for his sin by prayer, submission, and penance; and through his self-immolation he longed for the resolution of the mystery—the sublimation of the body and blood of man—the secret of the deification of matter.

He would rise superior to the trammels of sense. By mortification, remorse, and sorrow—haunted by the phantom of his single sexual sin—he would conquer.

Who would have known the fastidious, eclectic Adam Arethune in the furrowed, bowed, anxious-eyed novice in his white fustian and coarse cloak?—those habits of fastidious eclectism paired with the habits of quantity which he had despised, and now thought he had left outside the convent gate. But nothing caught by the mind is lost, and these ways of reduction and analysis

but lay hidden, to leave the things of daily routine—yes, but to rise as calisthenics for the discriminating and grasping powers of the brain—clogged and hampered in these months of the novitiate by the shock which had fallen upon it.

During these months outside events and circumstances passed over him as shadows. A novice master, whose aim was to reduce his charges to puerile subjection by the infliction of absurd, almost laughable tasks and trials; the habits of his fellow-postulants—some very young, up to all the pranks of mischievous Italian schoolboys —some older, earnest, conscientious and devout, plastic material for monk making; the ways of the friars—their lazy, good-humoured, female penitent,—shadowed life, objectless, sleepy, paralysing, fitly illustrated by their droning, monotonous choir chanting: all these things were lost to the young man who lashed himself with the thongs of his mental scorpions, there, in his cell, fixing for himself a "discipline" infinitely rougher and more hurtful than the knotted toy of soft cord which has superseded the extravagant torture of wire and oakum inflicted upon their rebellious bodies by the old monastic enthusiasts.

At the end of his time of novitiate the popular idea concerning Adam Arethune was favourable. He was silent and submissive. Not even the truculent novice master could find fault with him. The only fault—if fault it could be called—in him, was his perpetual state of absorption. He took no notice of, and no interest in, anything or anybody. He seemed to be entirely wrapped up in his studies and his reflections. He was become quiet, amenable, and inscrutable. The simple and ignorant monks watched him with something like fear.

He was uncommon, and he might be a saint in embryo. What would the order of St Dominic do if such a "lumpy" affair as a saint appeared in its midst?—in this age of agents, contractors, syndicates, and corners, of all the freaks of sceptical commercialism, of millionaires and radicalism, of bankrupt, weak aristocracies, of wealthy and powerful adventurers! The prior—a worthy little black-eyed man, with a crick in his neck—took an especial interest in Adam, much as a boy who breeds silkworms watches the development of a chrysalis or cocoon. The young man was studious and quick, and, despite the cloud which seemed to enwrap him, passed through the recondite preliminaries of his priesthood with a marvellous ease, and showed besides, as time went on, such a decided aptitude for controversial philosophy, which is but the sacerdotal development of the spirit of argument and contradiction well exemplified in the younger Adam Arethune, that the prior came to the conclusion that, by and by, this young monk would make a fine missioner, and that his ordination should not be delayed.

Nor was it. In his twenty-seventh year, on a May morning, Adam Arethune received the cowl and mantle of St Dominic as a priest-friar, and twenty-four hours after he received an intimation from the little crick-necked prior that he must apply himself exclusively to the study of theology, rhetoric, ethics, and logic, in order to keep himself intellectually fit for the army of missionary priests.

"After leaving here," said the prior, "you will go to our centre at Lyons. It will be a good field for you to exploit. Most of our youngsters get their sea legs from St Dominic of Lyons. It is a good recruiting ground

for you sucking preachers. You will find Father Hilary, the prior there, a man who sees one's bad and good in no time at all. You will be a good child and do us credit."

He was quite serious in his paternal send-off. When he called Adam "his child," it comprehended for him all that was little, trusting, inexperienced, and in the leading strings of faith and obedience. If one had spoken to the amiable Father Castellucci of the strong mind struggling like a hardy plant towards the sunlight of the right and fit—of the strong, sturdy nature of man willing to follow in healthy, wholesome development the dictates of the mind—if one had suggested the index of eternity, the determining will, the fulcrum and momentum of all, bringing its experience from the past to shape the present, and form the future, he would have said:

"Pooh! pooh! one is not allowed to do these things. One is not allowed to form theories—to think for oneself. The Devil lurks—a roaring lion, a hissing snake, a flying dragon, an anything objectionable you've a fancy for, fabulous or authentic—the Devil lurks to catch our lightest vagrant thought, to turn it to the evil and sin rife outside the pale of belief prescribed by our fathers. They were ignorant visionaries perhaps, but still, we must be content to be ignorant visionaries too, because they said so—eating, drinking, shiftless creatures, unsexed, and unnatural, dependent for our soul on the fiat of Holy Mother Church." Poor Father Castellucci! Poor Holy Mother Church! Poor veiled woman of time struggling to show her face of truth through clouds of bigotry, prejudice, and blunder! Poor men and women condemned to the penal servitude of

error on the wild and vicious tryings of the insane and the abnormal!

Adam Arethune went to Lyons and commenced his course, and the Madonna of his religion still had emerald-green eyes and chestnut hair. She still stood six feet high, and alternately appeared in sackcloth or cheap black alpaca; and sometimes she looked uncommonly beautiful, as she lay tangled among the reeds and bulrushes of the River Hale. She looked beautiful among its waters, as they closed over her, as if they too loved her. And she looked battered and broken, bruised and buffeted, and made him sick, as all that was left of her was swirled by the wide mouth of the Lune into the deep, treacherous, noisy, and secret Irish Sea.

Yes, he commenced his course and laid Adam Arethune, the clever and promising young engineer, on the shelf of the black past, along with that drowned thing. And never a Habakkuk Mucklewrath; or Solomon Eagle—no John Baptist or Elias—no whip or lash of old or modern times preached perdition to the sinner better than he did. And the sleepy Lyonnais liked it. Folk of all lands appreciate a "screed o' gude sound doctrine"—substantial religious food, that you can get your teeth into! And they love to sit and hear their neighbours condemned to hell and all its torments. And what the preacher says so often fits one's neighbours. And surely when one strikes one's breast, and says, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" the humble petition is so great a concession that personal spiritual affairs must be solvent and safe.

Alone, and ever alone, the haunted man lived with the growing magnitude of his sin. Alone, and ever alone, the Thing tormented him. Alone in his cell—alone in

his pulpit—alone amidst the childish recreations of his mentally stunted associates—by reason of this solitude, the past grew to distinct and tangible dimensions, and his own prophecy thumped upon his heart and brain. He was carrying that dead girl round his neck to his death. In the passage from life to life, his votive Madonna looked at him with pathetic emerald eyes—dead—dead —dead.

CHAPTER VII

TIME moves, and man acknowledges his conqueror by yielding up his vitality to its pace little by little, day by day, month by month, and year by year. He makes the compulsory sacrifice of his youth, his manhood, his age, and his death upon the altar of holy Mother Dhurga!

I like that Eastern conception of the voracious monster Time.

In Lyons—in Paris—where afterwards he was sent—time moved monotonously but molliently with the young monk. He sought no change and found none; yet, though the black loom of the past was still there, he faced it courageously, offering to an affronted Deity the fibres of his life in a manner his first desires had not intended. Yet, although he did not seek it, he was changing. His mind was rousing itself from the blow which had flung it into the lethargy of despair and remorse. Unconsciously to himself, he was developing into a speculative recluse. As a preacher, he paid excellently, and the monastic chapter found him always a good card to play. He was very popular with the devout ladies—these legions of Eves who hunt the forbidden fruit and call it religion. He was the more popular because they might have been a plantation of cabbages

for all the notice he took of them. But he was handsome, he was interesting, he looked as if he had a past, he was picturesque, taciturn out of the pulpit, and something mysterious. In the pulpit he was a very Boanerges. He made them tremble, cry, and confess.

He had been a priest-friar five years, when he was sent for to preach a Lenten mission at a fashionable Parisian church, and something happened that proved one of the milestones of a career. It was a very little thing. It always is.

The prior spoke to him laughingly:

"You've got a nest full of sinners yonder, Father Arethune. Take care you give them plenty of fireworks, but don't tread on their toes too heavily, or it may affect the collection. There! I needn't warn you. You don't want me to put you up to any rostrum tricks."

Fireworks and rostrum tricks! The theatrical properties of Heaven! He had heard this sort of thing many a time. He had even protested, by his absence, and by his manner, when present, at the coarse reduction of their profession into obscene jests and malodorous anecdotes, so prevalent among these men who live alone and away from the refining influence of women. It had been forced upon him—striking through those clouds of memory like dispelling electricity—that this life was worthless, empty, stupid, lazy. These men were not devoted to God. Their prayers were a mockery, their attitude a sham—for God had become a profession—a trade—a thing of livelihood. Man wants something other than prayer and contemplation. His mind, however he cramps it to the purpose, cannot subsist on fantasy and legend, any more than his body can live on treacle or salt. The Mind is a mighty thing, however it may

be crippled, and it will draw to its sustenance unwholesome food, grasping at fungus if it cannot get fruit, and the body follows its master's way. So it is with the celibate priest—monk or secular. He is plunged headlong into the treacle and salt of a fanciful symbology which, taken on its face, *as it should never be taken*, has no foothold of reason or nature in it. He vows himself to it, body and soul, and the soul corrupts, and the body rots —for the thing is unnatural, and the creed makes no such demands. Fundamentally, Christianity is the cult of the Mind, as the older Pantheism was the cult of the Body. It is the expression of the primary beliefs innate in man. It is primitive and ultimate. It was incepted by a man who, in spite of all, was a philosopher. But its usage and application have been lost, and distorted by its votaries into a vainglorious system which defies nature and rebukes God.

Adam Arethune saw the results of this in his monastery. In Rome, in Lyons, in Paris, he found many good men clad in the white cloth he had adopted. He found also many whose lives were a blunder and who had not the courage to say so. He found wicked men too—wicked because they had transgressed iron rules which were the law out-of-doors—in the "world"—men to whom chastity meant disease and moral corruption—men whose physical well-being depended on woman, and who, for fear of being thought coward or renegade, mortified themselves into mental deformity, calling on a God who answered through the demands of the flesh which should have supplied the physical pabulum to strengthen the mind. What are the rules of an order to these? It is almost well when they set them at naught; for Adam Arethune shuddered to see, in many cases, to

what a depth of unnatural insanity the perverted mind can fall. The glutton, the drunkard, the man who, under the cloak of sanctity, cherishes the most unnatural passion, all engendered and fostered by a system of mortification and enforced and irrational abstinence. He was forced at last to face the assurance that, of those conscientious, good, and healthy men who form the edifying stratum of the monastic life, the great majority had been married before they entered the order or had lived a life in compliance with the demands of the senses, and had sought the convent when this life had lost its zest. As a fact, nature had had her fling, and God might take the rest in devotion and contemplation. For the others—old men who had lived since boyhood in the cloister; boys who were battling with its requirements—the first were cancerous, their flabby muscles puffy and unwieldy, unhealthy, morbid, disappointed, or fanatics; and the last were—to be pitied. And he pitied them, and in pitying these young novices came the humanising influence upon his mind which had ever been a stranger to it. That influence of sympathy which, had he known it, would have taken him away from Halton years ago, and so saved Mary Ivory—that influence of sympathy which, in his working with his brother, would have kept him there where his brains lay—that influence of sympathy which would have seen through the mistaken proselytising of Ganersh and would have warned him against the submersion of a life.

It faced him through those poor boys! He was selfish—he was vain—it was his egotism which had brought him there. It was his selfishness which had reared that phantom with the green eyes and dank hair to haunt him to his doom.

There was one novice in particular who attracted his attention—a young fellow of twenty-two, obviously dying of consumption. The mother and cousin of this lad shadowed the monastic waiting rooms. But they could go no further, and after he took to his pallet they were never allowed to see him. He was dying as far from their love and ministrations as if he had been perishing on the African Gold Coast. The girl-cousin wore her heart on her sleeve. She loved him. She was a healthy, beautiful girl, devoted and straight. Adam Arethune knew that if the dying boy had not succumbed to the temptations (they were no less, though they rose from the enthusiasm of proselytising) to join this great army of dreamers, he would have married Berthe and lived perhaps to a good and useful old age. What was worse, the young monk knew it—had known it long—and the storm within him resulting from the bitter awakening to the truth and the peril to his honour on earth and his salvation in heaven was killing him. It was martyrdom perhaps! But to what good?—to be a pebble in the pavement of a foolish and unnatural system—to be trodden and trampled by the crowd which follows—to be forgotten and swamped in the multitude which goes before—to be a life prorogued, an opportunity lost, a task shelved.

It was on the day of this young brother's burial—all alone, with no eye of relative upon him—nothing but the dismal monkish rites—that a thing happened to Adam which opened the gates, so to speak, of the hidden working of his brain, and made them operative and compulsory. He had nursed the dead lad, and the event of brother Hyacinth's final illness and death had tried him sorely.

It was the first death he had seen. Hitherto, such

happenings had not fallen to his mission. He had listened to the fixed idea of the young fellow's wandering mind—always connected with and floating round Berthe. Their common childhood and youth—their love vows: spoken so young, when both were children—their love that thickened and solidified as they grew older. The change in him—the fidelity in her! The dream! the awakening!—to know that it was Berthe he wanted and not a hypothesis—that he was a living man, and not a mechanism to be moved on the rusty, time-worn pins and screws of fallacy and folk belief.

There were times when the lad's ravings nearly drove Adam mad. They showed up so plainly and in such unquestionable guise the cold, callous, thoughtless cruelty of the system which had evoked them. And when Hyacinth's mind hung round his cousin with such tenderness, such pathetic contrition, as never a transgression against monastic rule brought forth, it seemed to Adam as if a lost soul complained of the ignorant blindness of arrogance and the misconception of duty.

When Hyacinth died, Adam took the task upon himself to break the news of his death to his mother and cousin, and the girl's grief upset him for days. It was so quiet—but her face brought back another; and Adam fled from the face of Berthe Courvoisier, clutching his own phantom of the past closer and closer to his heart. So on the day of Hyacinth's funeral he wandered into the convent library and sought to steady his nerves by study.

He ranged over many books, and none attracted him. At last, he came upon one thrust into a corner, and covered with dust and cobwebs. It was a little black book, and Adam moved it out of the way of a large

folio volume of the works of Aquinas. It fell on to the floor, and, as he picked it up, he opened it.

It was the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza.

Beyond the study of Baruch Spinoza in quotation and extract as an enemy of Christianity in particular and religion in general, Adam, like most ecclesiastics, knew little of the great Hebrew philosopher. Spinoza is one of those subtle arguers whose propoundings are as well kept away from the mind which is hampered and barred by systematic dogma. Hegel says that a man who seeks to be a student of metaphysic must first become a Spinozist. And it is true. But Spinoza is the liberal premier in the parliament of thought, and dogma sits on the opposition benches. Therefore, he is bad for the conservatives, and must be either repudiated altogether or taken in small innocuous doses, and then only to prove a contrary argument.

The little black book, however, had lain, perdu, on the convent shelf, and goodness knows what mischief it had done before it fell into Adam's hands. Not much lately by the dust and cobwebs. But the little black book was like its writer. It bided its time, maybe, and when it fell into likely hands, it hit straight and from the shoulder: much as did the black-browed Portuguese Jew himself, when he spoke from his clear, level, and judicial brain.

Adam Arethune settled himself to study Baruch Spinoza, and he was mightily struck by the way in which the sage of Amsterdam cleared away the symbolisms and obscurities in the Old Testament, reducing the flowery vernacular and high-flown metaphorical diction of the Eastern recorders to simple language, setting forth natural facts with the sparseness and exactitude of a

current news-sheet. Things revered as miracles showed themselves merely natural atmospheric manifestations under the lucid guidance of Spinoza. Complex incidents to be puzzled over and given up in despair, by vague mysticism, became historical happenings, tinsel stripped and stark, under his regulating, pruning pen.

It was the first rung in a ladder which Adam Arethune was to climb, slowly, painfully, with much travail and disillusion—a ladder held on high by the ghost of Mary Ivory—a ladder of desolation leading to reason and revolt. For the credulous and foolish are gregarious, but the thinker lives alone, and love and he do not agree.

CHAPTER VIII

THE revolution begun by Spinoza was carried on through many other channels, and Adam's mind became voracious for catholic opinion. Beginning at books, he travelled to men, and sought to probe contemporary thought through its exponents. The first thing that struck him was the positive idiotcy of the most erudite of his brethren of the habit in matters scientific and progressive. They knew nothing about them. Their ideas were still wrapped up in the fairy tales of their ancestors, and if, in his new capacity of thought-hunter, Adam introduced into the monastic recreative conversation a novel subject—proved and knowledge in the outer world—the most learned religious were reduced to the condition of ignorant children, without the acquisitive intelligence of the child.

They believed then, as they did in the days of Galileo, and they were fully prepared to roast any other Galileo who came and told them that this earthly, small, inferior planet was not the sole and entire object of the solicitude of the ruling forces of the universe and the end and trend of creation.

As for the bogies of the day—the study of evolution, the march towards mental and political liberalism, the emancipation and enfranchisement of women and slaves

—they knew nothing about them, and cared less. They despised women and they themselves were slaves. They were not allowed to be liberal, and their politics were children's prattle. As for evolution, they shuddered at it as a vicious and damnable heresy, refusing to canonise St Charles Darwin, and flinging him summarily and without trial into the Tartarus of the Index Ex Purgatorium.

Adam, therefore, withdrew himself more and more from the society of his colleagues and contemporaries, and associated himself more and more with the ghosts of great men expressed in their written thoughts. More books than Spinoza in the convent library were covered in dust and cobwebs. In fact, the collection was very little used. Of what use are books to men who think in chains? It was easy for him to obtain out-of-doors the works of those great and liberal thinkers who make for reason and nature's ways. It was easy for him to bring them into his retreat and devour them in an unbroken solitude. Nobody disturbed him. Nobody knew and nobody cared. His position in the confraternity was now high enough for him to study as he pleased. It was not so easy to face both ways at once and to preach in accordance with the evolution and expansion of his mind, and yet to keep within the bounds of a religious fabric, lightly built on unsubstantial base, and the growth of centuries. It was easy enough to fog-bother his audiences and his monkish companions, and out of it to get the reputation of being a profound theologian—a great rhetorician. His sermons, now savouring somewhat of heresy, became more piquant and attractive than ever, and paid better. The monastic eyes, therefore, were closed to any little exhibition of

heterodoxy. They were only feelers, to be lopped by Rome if they threatened to spread into tentacles. Meantime, there was more money in Father Arethune than in any other of their oratory. And, meantime, Father Arethune, finding solace, rest, and forgetfulness, and a satisfaction for his starved and attenuated mind unattainable to his brethren of the rule, grew out of and away from the obstinate predications of that system which may not stand investigation and therefore forbids it, and passed without let or hindrance down the long line of exact and rational dialectics: from the inception of the idea of a great God or Power in the noise of the thunder and the convulsions of the earthquake in the infant mind of savage man to the sweeping, comprehensive finals of Herbert Spencer, the narrowed deductions of Max Müller, the logomachies of Matthew Arnold, the prolix erudition of Strauss, the sentimental brilliancy of Renan—with his crude, inadequate, unsatisfactory Jesus —to the crass materialism of Haeckel. The idolatry and euhemerism of the whole thing seemed plain. It was all the same. It was everywhere. In those primitive ages, in our own days. From the worship accorded to the spirit of his dead father by an Andaman islander to the last Vatican promulgation of beatification. It was all the deification of a man—the sublimation of a woman. It came to one end. It was reduced to one product. The result of all thought, the desire of humanity. The want and lack of the mind. The hub of the universe. The apotheosis of human love.

Human love is the threshold of heaven, and the wards and warriors of human life are the senses, the body, the blood, the soul, the divinity of man. Misuse them, corrupt them, and they lie, flaccid, beaten, broken,

vanquished by the will they should serve and strengthen to the passing of that threshold into the perfect state—the heaven of the right and fit.

These convictions were hammered into Adam's brain in the course of two years' extraneous study. The passing knowledge of things that lay round and about us strengthened them, rubbed them in. Every book or newspaper article detailing traveller's experiences, every new finding of astronomy or chemistry, every synthesis which biology was forced to form from unmistakable proof—all these confirmed him in the determinations started in his mind by the little black book of Baruch Spinoza.

God is the Great Mind, and the senses themselves are its human manifestation—its only Messiah. The Jew took a fragment of wheat and said, "Take ye and eat, for this is my body!" and of the juice of the grape he said, "Drink ye of this, it is my blood!" And down the long ages we have waited for a Darwin to tell us what he meant. From the seed of corn, from the seed of the vine, may man's corporeality come. His soul is the expression of the infinite and eternal force of intellectual progress. Stunt and neglect the mind, defy and outrage the senses, and you stunt, defy, neglect, and outrage God Almighty.

CHAPTER IX

IN these studies—in these conclusions—so convincing, so sure, Adam found more consolation and more salve for what had gone before than in all self-inflicted penance. There, in his cell, resolving these things out of many intellects into his own; taking the ideas of those great thinkers and sorting them by the regulating capacity of his own innately mathematical mind, he saw. And, seeing, found himself a great mistake, a blunder of thirty-four years. He felt like a widower. He had deserted her—he had lost her—and his bride had no sin. He accepted her now as his Madonna, for she was his own, the woman of his life. Looking back, he saw that the hand of that clay girl had held his duty, his happiness, his completion. He had spurned it. He had lost her. He had chased a bubble, and he had found—nature sitting at the end of the run with the bubbles of man's imagination in her lap, throwing them back at him, that the mucilage from which bubbles grow shall oil the springs of his mind, and so bring him nearer to her, clothed and whole, looking her straight in the face.

Adam dare not defy this force of truth. How dare he tread those pulpit steps and stand there facing an expectant crowd, to preach myth as if it was fact—to

twist legend into history and call it theology—the knowledge of the true God—when he had got a greater, more trustworthy knowledge of the true God from a Dutch Jew whose mental output is condemned by the hierarchies, than in all the subtleties of the Church Fathers—when, by the light of that Dutch Jew, he saw the meaning of that other Jew so lucid and plain! Through Baruch Spinoza he saw Jesus of Nazareth very clearly: a leader of men whose misfortune lay in the fact that he lived at a time of transition and amongst a people whose appetite for sensational fiction was boundless, and whose capability for ignorant exaggeration knew no limit of likelihood or sense. He groped down to the foundation stones of the Christian faith and found them—those four evangelical pedestals—to crumble at his touch. They were not trustworthy. They would not bear unbiassed analysis or critical investigation. To his opening mind they suggested themselves as the works of unknown scribes who were recording the scattered and extravagant recollections of a few men inclined to anecdote and enlarge about a hero whom they slavishly admired, but about whom they really knew little—the scrip of men who were speaking of bygone events from gossip and mixed hearsay and insecure data. They did not help him. He must reject them. While the real meaning of the man whose doings they pretended to set forth gripped his brain and strengthened there. No visionary—no dreamer! The Nazarene gave forth rational truth, and his foolish hearers and commentators misunderstood—took it first face, and dressed it up in a ghastly garbage of lies.

Yes, he would tread those pulpit stairs. He would go up there this fair Easter Sunday and he would preach

the great fact and insignia of the Church in its naked and actual verity. He would show that centre of catholic and pagan development—the high world of Paris—what transubstantiation means—and is.

The prior of the Dominicans in Paris at that time was a superior of a three-months-old election—the very Reverend Bruno Ballin, an Irish religious of stern rule and exact method. He had heard Father Arethune's sermons, and lately he disapproved of them. In the first place, Father Arethune preached to the thinking few. He preached over the heads of the people. He dismissed as rubbish and folklore all the material aids to religion. He eschewed all theatrical tricks and sensational thrills. His Lenten sermons in the past year had been a failure. He had puzzled the people, and their compliance with the obligations of their pastors and superiors had been mingled with doubt as to the desirability for that implicit compliance. Moreover, he was attracting the *élite* of Parisian learning. The devout peasantry and the habituated bourgeoisie were crowded out by the elect of the faubourgs and the Academy, who thronged to his sermons. In fact, Father Arethune was gradually turning the Dominican Church into a lecture room, and himself into a ruthless professor, who was pulling down the time-erected straw stacks and mud ramparts of theology which hide the face of the real God from man.

And this was not the right thing to the rigid, narrowed conceptions of Father Bruno Ballin. He had taken the opportunity afforded by his position of rebuking Father Arethune for holding what he considered to be dangerous opinions, and Father Arethune, whose habits of reserve and inscrutability were growing upon him, had absolutely refused to discuss the subject. In fact, he had changed

it. And the Very Reverend Bruno Ballin had been nonplussed and had retired in dubiety.

Upon this Easter Day he sang mass, and with the corners of his hard Irish mouth turned down and his hands hidden in his wide sleeves, he sat down to await the sermon with his attendants, having much the same feeling that a dairyman would experience who had clogged the heels of a Derby favourite with his milk cart and who had then given the racer his head.

The tall, elegant figure of Father Arethune, rendered taller and more elegant by his picturesque white and black draperies, passed into the pulpit with his usual quick, decided step, bent upon one sole objective—the controversial end he had in view.

Standing there, looking out upon a concourse, he began, and his first words made Father Bruno Ballin look up with a jerk, as if the very start were jeopardising the milk, butter, and eggs in his carefully packed cart.

"Brethren," said Adam Arethune in his quiet, incisive, far-reaching voice, "I will give you two texts. The first is a paraphrase. The second comes from one of your own teachers. 'He took a fragment of wheat, and, giving it to them, said—This is my body. And He took the juice of the grape, and, giving it to them, said—This is my blood.' It is unnecessary to quote my authority for these words. Nor need I give you my authority for the second of my texts: 'Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira.' It is spoken, brethren, by your Pascal, and it is his apology for and commentary on religious observances exercised by people of indolent mind, content with blind and unquestioning faith."

Father Bruno Ballin kept his head raised and his

eyes on the preacher. At other times of discourse the prior as acting celebrant nodded and dozed. The monk in the rostrum was sure to dance in the prescribed pulpit shackles. Not so Father Arethune. One had to keep one's eye on him, one's ears open, and on this occasion Father Ballin felt that both were very necessary.

Father Arethune followed up his exordium with a succinct and graphic sketch of the religion of habit and inculcation—the doings of our fathers which have become occupations to ourselves—religion as a pastime, a votive prevarication from other and sterner duties. The preacher climbed down the ladder of time. He touched with unsparing hand, remorselessly, judicially, on religion as a scourge, as a faction engine; the indefensible attitude it took on in the Middle Ages; the attitude it has taken on everywhere and at all time against debaters and opposition. He demonstrated the humanity of dogma —its origin in the obstinacy of man's immature perceptions. He climbed still further down the time ladder and compared the pantheism of the old civilisations with the monotheism of the new. Further still, and he dismissed civilisation, so called, and brought his hearers face to face with the prime problem of anthropology —the beginnings of man, the rudimentary mind, the shadow of the true God!

The church in which he preached was the most fashionable and one of the largest in Paris. It was filled with a mixed audience, for Father Arethune was becoming a lion. Plenty of English, more Americans, New Zealanders, Australians, Germans, Belgians, Italians, men of an older and more Eastern nationality: even these crowded and stood through the long discourse with

tireless and expectant attention. This was such a very unusual sermon!

"Look," quoth the preacher—"look in the Polynesian group of islands—look in the wilds of your own America—look in your lately-won Africa, you English—look in your contested possessions, you Germans—look at home under your Oriental sun, you that are neither of our race nor hemisphere! Come back and look in the byways and alleys of Paris, New York, Berlin—in the slums of London—among these spots of earth which the moulding hand of civilised humanitarianism has left untouched—you will see the so-called creation—the evolution of the thinking, calculating animal from the brutish, uncounting animal—the seeds of reason and the capacity for logic growing and springing from the lower stratum of mind as instinct and immediate appetite only. How slight are the gradations! how slow the progress! Yet search, and you will find a tutor in the Carib, in the Yucatan, in the Cree, in the Zulu, in the aborigines of the Australian and New Zealand bush, in the Veddah, the Pahari, the peasant of the soil, as ignorant and savage in his perceptions as they—the dweller in the darkness of the dreg streets and offal lanes of your great metropolis, wherever it may be. Here and in these you will find religion in the making; a component and concurrent part of man in the making. It is parented by fear—fear of the unknown and inexplicable—fear of death. In the primitive logic of primitive man fear looms paramount and first, and his wisdom lies in combat, prevention, in his establishment of a mediator, of an arbitrator. Sin is the result of his struggle for existence. Morality is the statute set up by those of his tribe who are strongest. In outraging this statute he is vicious or

virtuous by reason of his comparative strength alone. If he is too weak, his outrage is crime—sin. If he is stronger than the morality builders, his outrage becomes moral law in supersession to theirs. But he borrows the means for this victory from his brute ancestry, his animal strength, his aggression; and his infant reason fears the powers that are stronger than himself—that he cannot fight and cannot understand. Here is the secret of faith. Here the necessity for vicarious atonement. In the lightning which slays, the savage man finds his God. In the dead body which the lightning causes, he finds his Christ. He cannot account for the one, which he fears from his ignorance; and he cannot understand the state of the other, which he fears from his ignorance too. He propitiates a natural phenomenon with a natural mystery, and in nescience and terror, the phantasmata of the imagination, the mythopœic faculty in its state of crude adolescence, you have the inception of credulism, faith, worship."

There was no slumber possible for Father Bruno Ballin. What would this iconoclast say next?

Father Arethune proceeded to touch lightly but surely and very firmly on the universality and catholicism of creed from its lowest historical data. He pointed out its common marks—the terrifying unknown power, to be propitiated by sacrifice and victims, the mediator, the holocaust, the dead man who dies to save the erring believers. He steadily and carefully followed the course of the creed of the Semitic tribes from its nascent idolatry of monoliths—its pillars and rings set up and anointed by its chiefs—down through time to the spiritualisation of its primitive God by the scribes and prophets. He dwelt on the landmark in religious

history made by that acute diplomatic and specious patriarch, Moses. He demonstrated with striking conviction the methods of this fine old reformer, who should certainly stand foremost in the ranks of archetypal politicians, showing with unmerciful accuracy the Mosaic manipulation of the old, gross, physical, phallic worship of upstanding stones and visible emblems of the generative principle and of the fecund earth into an ethereal, unlimited, immeasurable, occult immensity. In short, the preacher expounded without compunction the growth of the ancient ethnic god Jahweh into the sonorous and omnipotent Je-ho-vah! following the progress of this spiritualised faith which, through the acute perceptions and man knowledge of its founder, built its power and supremacy so solidly and effectually on that primitive controller of our species—the awful and unknown—to its exposition by his successor, the peasant Jew of Lower Syria—the man who took the Mosaic law unto himself and reshaped it to a rationalism holding in its egg the rudiments of all mediæval and modern science and all mediæval and modern folklore and reactionary abuses.

"I have carefully and gradually followed the career of those old Arabic tribes," said the preacher, "because you in your Christian philosophy are their descendants. I might have taken you down as great an evolution and shown you Zoroaster in the stead of Moses. But as the Iranian fire worship is but a phase in my scheme, I shall only mention it here as it bears upon what we must now arrive at. The reality which that man of Galilee strove to express—what is it? We have seen it worshipped as the hidden terrors of nature. We have seen it worshipped as the principle of generation in its coarse,

sensual exposition by the Semitic tribes—in its more refined, far-reaching, and potential condition of heat or fire worship. We have known and felt its anthropomorphic influence upon our thoughts and lives in the glib and meaningless devotion to an impossible deity of the countries of Europe and the senseless bibliolatry of England and America. Put aside these conceptions as useless and enervating. They are the devices of ignorant fear and presumptuous indolence.

"Let us look to the thinkers—to that parliament of great men of all ages, of all nations, of all colours, creeds and times—those men who are, have been, and will be; ostracised by their lazy, foolish contemporaries for the truth which has come to them in their tireless, patient waiting and industry.

"An Englishman called God, 'That trend of things which makes for right adjustment,' and this is good; but I would prefer myself to call that Force which thought enshrined in humanity must appreciate the eternal law of intellectual operation.

"Let us now come to the man who brought us here to-day—to the man in whose honour this church was built—this day denominated—that Syrian Jew we call Christ, the anointed of the Lord. I do not wish to tear away the glamour of tradition, the cloud of myth, which surrounds Him. It is not my wish to complain, as so many thinkers must, of the little we really know and can prove about Him. I do not reject the gospel stories. I take them for what they are worth—unauthenticated and biassed tales told by imaginative and uncultured men, which have lost nothing in their transmittance to posterity. Still, I must ask you to look through this wind-swept collection of marvel at Jesus as He really was. It

is a life we can follow and analyse without epistolary help, without fairy tale or fanciful panoply. Let us follow it! Of dubious birth, the son of a peasant woman, of a sensitive, anxious, enthusiastic temperament, prone to mysticism, to meditation, to flights of the untrammelled imagination—a dreaming Eastern boy whose discontent of His rural environment is shown by tradition. Follow His life still further, and you see Him carrying out this promise very faithfully—the disciple of a fanatic who won the suffrages of the common people, the infant mind, as all fanatics do, by their appeal to God as the hidden terror. Watch the development of this great leader of men from His youth to manhood and early middle age, and you want no history. You can fill in all by the exact logic of nature. Sloughing his neuroticism, His discontent, His wandering imaginings, in experience and travel, we find Him a thinker, a teacher, a philosopher; but—and this is our bane—so strongly imbued with the mysticism of His time, race, and that old Mosaic creed, that, catching at concrete truths as He did, He was not able, or did not choose, to ravel them. I am inclined to think He did not choose, for, being a son of the people, He played to the people and committed the grave error and injustice to posterity of preaching physiology and morality in parable. It may be that you will argue for, and that I will agree in the necessity for this error; for the infant mind will take only infant food, and the nucleus of a new phase of belief, a new religion, must be the common, plain, childish people who love air-balls and prismatic bubbles. It may be that the Syrian gave His philosophy to the few; but, brethren, we have heard for two thousand years the shout of the crowd only; we have publicly had the bubbles and air-balls

tossed to us, but His philosophy is still given to the few, and those few are called by the theology ball-players—agnostic, freethinker, and atheist. Yet they forget that this Christ Himself was a freethinker and that the terms agnosticism, atheism, are meaningless, vocabular forms. There is no such thing as a man who admits no God and who does not know himself a factor in that trend which makes for right adjustment—who is not an expression of the eternal law of intellectual operation."

The crux of Father Arethune's extraordinary discourse was now come. Father Bruno Ballin sat aghast, open-mouthed and staring. What would the authorities say to this destroyer of myth and fable?—this heretic who threw down the gage of truth and exactitude to time, openly repudiating the nebulous landmarks of their faith and rubbing the gloss off the symbolism which had been its trademark?

There was not a movement in the great building—not a murmur! Wonderful to relate—not a cough, at sermon time! He might have been preaching above their heads but apparently they liked climbing. He may have been preaching heresy, but it sounded so true and sensible that it held them fast.

He went on in his clear tones, so direct and convincing, without theatrical trick or noisy movement—immobile, imperturbable, reaching to the vestiges of men's thoughts.

"I give my minor text to those of you who would retain those balls and bubbles. Keep them, play with them, take them for solid gold or crystal, as they please or comfort you. Pascal's words are an extenuation for this: 'Religious observances will help you to believe, make you stupid!' If you are contented to believe in blind stupidity, soh! You are the material

expression of that eternal law of intellectual operation, and you will be judged by the event—by your future state—in your manipulation of it. Let those of you who run with me—heed!"

He paused, and a sound like a great sigh swept the vast congregation. There had never been a sermon like this preached there before. No exhortations! no blame! no fireworks! no turgid oratory! no condemnation of other faiths to hold up one's own!—just an incontrovertible exposition of the reason for their being there at all—of the reason for their being. Wise men, savants, among them, had puzzled their brains over this thing until they rejected it all as untenable fustian. This Dominican was clearing it so that they felt ashamed of themselves and their learning that they had not seen it so before in its clarity and necessity.

"I need not remind you who are ethnical students that the physical fact of the evolution of species is not new. It was commonly accepted hundreds of years before the time of Christ. Pythagoras taught it. It is concrete in the Buddhist religion. All Eastern philosophies maintain it. Jesus knew these philosophies. He had studied them. In those years of His life of which we know nothing of Him, in spite of opinion, I have no doubt at all He had been brought in contact with their peoples, and you will readily know what He meant by those cabalistic words, plain and exact, which He bestowed upon the food and drink there before Him. From a grape—from a grain—in the process of time—may come the complex organism man—the machine which expounds through his rational will the eternal law of intellectual operation. Brethren, these words of Christ display Him the precursor of men who have since

been condemned by the hierarchies as material atheists—Lamarck, Charles Darwin, and their followers. Thinkers, independent synthesists, cogitate this problem! see what it does! Brethren, it sets forth our Founder as a fact for which we want no historical trimming—no symbol, sign, or perversion of nature. All these may well come after, by gossip and prattle and the desire of petty arrogance for arbitrary power, grounded on that primitive worship from fear of the unknown. They do not affect Him one iota. He stands there, Himself, wheat and fruit in hand—a man who, led by courage, thought, and conviction, told the truth. A man of sorrows—yes, as all men are who tell the truth to the indolent and childish who love ease and fable and who procrastinate to their doom. That peasant of Lower Syria gave the rule of life to wise and fools alike: 'The slave who seeks not his master's will deserves to be beaten with stripes!' Think for yourself, lest you be thrown into the outer darkness of ignorance by neglect of that everlasting and universal law manifested in yourselves; for the body of the Son of man comes from the slime of the earth to be the Messiah, the vehicle for progress, the co-operator and interactionary of the eternal law of intellectual operation —the Great Mind—the Real God."

CHAPTER X

AMONG the vast audience which had assembled to hear Adam Arethune's extraordinary discourse was a man who left the church, alone, immediately after the peroration, in which the preacher commended his lecture to the respectful attention of the congregation. He had stood, a silent, immovable witness during the whole. He never took his ash-yellow eyes from the orator's face. He had stood near the rostrum, his pale face upturned to catch each incisive syllable which issued from those thin, well-moulded lips, to scatter through Christendom the clearing of a dogmatic hist—to turn, by the argument of the brain that drove them, the key to a closed door.

He walked with a long slurring footstep, this man, like one whose shoes have not always borne the cipher of London or Parisian bootshops; and he carried his head bent, nor heeded the occasional glances of curiosity directed at himself. He had been used to these from his birth and had come to disregard them. He headed for the handsomest hotel in Paris, and entered it with the air of a man who knew the building quite well enough to make himself at home. And indeed its attendants made bland and obsequious way for him into the best suite its faultless accommodation supplied.

Upon the green fronting the hotel a band was playing

a dreamy, sensuous figure dance—one of those lately devised things of Sclavonic origin, all sweep and dip and languid curving sound—the sort of music that conjures to one's mind ideas of tall, supple women and gauzy, flowing robes, laces, jewels, and shimmering things that sweep and trail and scatter radiance with voluptuous languor—that set one's senses up in arms of disgust and dislike of frills, jerks, jumps, and obesity—the frumpish, inelegant commonplaces of everyday life.

He paused and listened to the melody, going on his way with a short and sharp sigh, and opening the door of an inner chamber in the large and handsome collection of rooms retained to him in the hotel. He held the door in his hand and stood still. It was a large room, luxuriously furnished like the rest. Its windows opened on to the garden where the band played, and in the sunshine the personification of the raised idea carried out the suggestion of the Sclav composer. That is to say, the tall, elegant woman in shimmering garments and glinting gems danced in perfect harmony with the music outside.

She had a sinuous grace about her, this woman, not borrowed from or suggestive of any animal or reptile. She was not like a cat, a tiger, or a serpent. No such bad and incongruous simile ever came into a sane person's head respecting a beautiful, graceful woman. Think of a monster who was like a cat, a tiger, or a serpent, and banish the metaphor as inadmissible. She was beautiful and graceful enough to touch with a witch's magic those masculine points of contact which are susceptible to beauty and grace. But the face of the man in the doorway looked haggard and ghastly, as if her grace and beauty hurt him, and as if her light gliding feet were treading and slipping in the blood of his heart.

Presently the music outside came to an end in a long-sustained diminuendo, and the dancer swept a curtsey, with a low, derisive laugh and a blown kiss, to something in the corner of the room. The something clapped its hands, cackled and scrambled to its feet—a hunchback, well-dressed, well-cared-for—and the lady turned to the door.

"What a time you have been!" she cried petulantly. "To leave me so long with nothing but Eliah to amuse me!"

The man came forward, smiling:

"Music is the pulse of thy limbs, chojukumi."

"Oh, I can't help dancing when I hear that sort of thing. Last night at the ballet I could not stay to see those ungainly creatures spoiling the sound. I wanted to show them how it ought to be done. Don't you think I can dance better than that Spanish woman, Ahmed? Don't you think *I* could dance at the 'Varietes'?"

"You can. You could. And I shouldn't like to see you," said the gentleman.

"'I can. I could.'" What do you mean? Oh, I can dance as well as the Spanish woman, and I could dance at the theatre. I wish you wouldn't talk in such jumble. When you are dead and Eliah has run away, I shall dance at the theatre—except—except—that I might have a bad dream."

She had turned upon a graceful foot curve while she was speaking, then stopped to make the last remark, looking out of the window with a puzzled line on her brow.

The man looked up at her out of the chair in which he had seated himself and said quietly:

"When do you have bad dreams, Miriam?"

"When strange people look at me. It isn't right

There's somebody out yonder I can't find. There's somebody yonder who can't find me. I hate being stared at. I hate strange people. Where did you say you'd been?"

"I didn't tell you because you didn't ask me. I've been to church."

"Spending the morning in a stuffy church, and leaving me with only Eliah to play with! Why don't you buy me an ape? 'Twould be better than Eliah. An ape! an ape! If I had one, perhaps it would do the same as the monkey you told me of, who murdered all the people and puzzled the Paris police. Wouldn't it be fun to have a monkey who could make that commotion? To have the police hunting high and low for the assassin, and to know you had him chained up at home—to come at a whistle!"

"You wouldn't like it. Think how cruel it would be."

"Would it be cruel? I don't know. It would be ugly. Monkeys are hideous. Was it a story you told me, or did the thing really happen, Ahmed?"

"It was a story I told you. Don't you remember?—*The Mystery of the Rue Morgue.*"

"No, I don't remember. I can't remember. You know that. And things that happen become stories and stories are only things that happened."

The gentleman rose.

"Yes, that is so, Miriam. Little rays of the sun of wit pierce the clouds of your affliction. Have you any chocolates?"

She laughed and shook her head, and, lifting an elaborate satin box from the table, turned it upside down.

h and I ate them all this morning. There was else to do. Where did you say you'd been?"

"To church. Here! Eliah!"

He threw a coin to the grinning hunchback, who had been standing in the corner where he first crouched to watch her dancing. Eliah Sedgrook laughed outright, and caught the coin.

"Chocolât sec! Boutique menier! Trois francs!" he said in a glib, parrot way.

"That's right. Go along."

The hunchback shambled out of the room, glancing over his shoulder at Mary Ivory pulling a flower to pieces in the window and strewing the floor with its petals.

Ahmed went to her and laid his hand on her arm.

"Mary——" he began.

"I wish you wouldn't call me Mary," she frowned.

"Miriam," he amended.

"Better. Prettier, prettier, prettier!" she said, tossing some of the petals into the air, and laughing when they lighted on Ahmed's head and shoulders.

"Miriam, when do you have bad dreams?" he repeated.

"When I'm asleep, of course."

"What are they?"

"I don't know. I can't remember. I never can remember. You know that. Why do you bother me? There are dark places—and I hate dark places; rushing water—and rushing water frightens me; and hideous creatures with rags round their heads and dressed in rags, covered in mud and dirt—and I hate mud, and dirt, and rags, and—and—general nastiness."

She sat down with a flop and raised her hands to her lips tremulously, while she looked up at him with tears in her green eyes.

The Threshold

She was more beautiful to look at at twenty-six than she had been at eighteen. She was a statue of grace and perfect feature at which men and women marvelled —but—but——

Alas, for the love in the younger eyes! alas, for the low, sweet thrill in the younger voice! Were they buried in those dreams? The eyes sparkled as of old, but their life passed into a cold, hard glitter. The voice was low and sweet, but it carried an undertone of callous discontent. She spoke in jerks and snatches. She moved on impulses. She was amused and fixed like a child on passing things that shone or attracted—people and objects bright and garish.

Ahmed lightly touched the hands which quivered at her mouth.

"Poor Miriam! Are you tired?"

She lowered her hands and looked about her.

"I want something to amuse me," she said.

"Will you come out with me this afternoon?"

"Where?"

"To the Salle Tinayre. There will be beautiful ladies—gay, amusing men there—bright colours, light tongues, music, flowers, prettiness—eh?"

He spoke as if she had been a child, and she nodded.

"Yes."

"You'll not forget?"

"I'll go dress now."

"Shall we have lunch first?"

"Oh, I forgot lunch. Yes, yes, yes."

CHAPTER XI

THERE was no doubt that Father Arethune's sermon was a challenge. He had spoken the truth that was working like yeast in his mind, and, like all such courageous creatures, he found himself in the position of the victorious nihilist who, having thrown a bomb to its deadly issue, is condemned and fled by his kind, more for destroying their graven images of custom and devastating the usages of habit and loose thought than for the actual cruelty of the deed.

After the sermon he went into the open air; for the fact of having spoken his convictions brought a reaction. He had given testimony to that deific force which he had called the law of intellectual operation—the only God which his mental training had brought him before—and he knew that the consequences would be immediate and far-reaching. Like a man who has gone through an ordeal, he felt that he wanted to breathe. So he went out into the Parisian streets, feeling that he had turned the solid earth of a big and time-fraught organism into the thin, inflammable crust of a volcano.

He walked with no fixed intent, rather to distract his mind, so long and so completely concentrated on its own machinery, and purposely turned into the largest and most crowded streets.

In one of these—a faubourg of attractive shops—he saw a figure crossing the road and darting in and out of the danger of the approaching traffic, which startled him by bringing to his memory on this, of all mornings, the real and true cause of his mental evolution—that woman whose life and death had so staggered his received ideas, that the influence of her connection with his own life had unquestionably led to this morning's work. The figure recalled Eliah Sedgrook. But Eliah Sedgrook in Paris was not possible—yet, were ever two poor deformed beings so exactly alike as the workshop assistant of Emmett the mystery and this tidily dressed, apparently reputable person crossing the Parisian faubourg?

He caught the pavement close to Adam, and looked at him with a vacant, transient glance. And Adam, assured by the full view of his face, followed him with an indefinable, unformed notion of finding his destination, his business, his associates.

The man had a packet under his arm, of which he seemed to take particular care, and he walked quickly and objectively, going straight to, and running up the handsome steps of the most *recherché* hotel in the city.

Adam, too, went up the steps, but more slowly, thoughtfully. He stopped at the commissionaire.

"Can you give me any information concerning the deformed man who came in now? I think he is the servant of an old friend of mine, but I cannot be sure."

"It may be, father," said the commissionaire civilly, "if your friend is a Turkish gentleman. The poor nigaud
the suite of one now staying here."
t may be, it may be," said Adam hurriedly, and the
showed him the visitors' book, where he read:

"H.H. Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan El Dala and suite," and below, "Miss Ivory."

He stood staring at the book with dropped jaw. Was the whole thing a lie?—a figment of the diseased brain of a madman? Was she not drowned? Did she not die? Yet, that could hardly have been, for his brother investigated and threshed the thing along its only visible line, until it was lost——

Lost in her rescue! Yes, he must have rescued her, and while Adam Arethune was setting her up in the niche of his mind as a cold, ethereal Madonna, looking at him with reproachful eyes; while her drowned, battered corpse had been an ever-present nightmare to his imagination, she had been living with His Highness Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan El Dala.

He pointed to the name.

"Is there anything peculiar about this gentleman?"

"Yes, father. He is very peculiar.

"Has he white hair—and is not yet old—and a pale face? Is he an albino?"

"He has white hair—yes, and a white face with strange eyes—yes, yes. He is great in his own land, they say, and Paris makes much of him, and Monsieur le President comes here to visit him."

"Yes, I know. I remember now to have heard of him."

He pointed again with a finger that quivered.

"The lady?"

The commissionaire became very French.

"Ah, father! The lady—is—English—and—inexpressible!"

"Tall? beautiful?"

The commissionaire hugged himself in an eloquent ecstasy of silence. Adam moved away, feeling that

something above his head, to which he had been looking, had shattered and fallen about his ears. The commissionaire took the liberty of intercepting him and voiced his opinion:

"Mademoiselle is—majestic! Mademoiselle is—magnificent! But—mademoiselle is—odd—very odd!"

He tapped his forehead, pursed his lips, and smiled.

Adam stopped.

"What? like *that*?" he spoke bluntly and pointed up the stair where Eliah Sedgrook had vanished.

The commissionaire shook his head.

"No, no. Mademoiselle is—eccentric! She can sing in a way to make your blood run cold. She can dance to drive you mad—like a sylph—like a—ghost—not like a living woman. The ladies at the opera couldn't do it. The ladies in the drawing-room couldn't do it."

"What is she to this Persian prince?"

"His ward. His Highness is attached to the Sultan, father."

"He is a Persian for all that. Yes, yes, I remember——"

A door clanged somewhere up the stairs. A rustling sound came to him; a man's voice—familiar—then a voice which made every globule of blood in his body to stop, then start and madly rush to head and heart.

His first impulse was flight, and he turned to go. The commissionaire stood aside and said:

"See! they are coming!"

A carriage drew up at the bottom of the steps. His second impulse prevailed. He waited.

Three gentlemen and a lady descended the stairs from the first floor. The foremost of these men was Emmett the mystery—a mystery somewhat elucidated, but a

personality little changed in appearance. He was dressed in faultless European style, with the exception of the fez; and the two gentlemen with him adopted the like fashion. One was a fair, fresh-faced Turk, stout and good-humoured; the other, dark and swarthy: the Persian attaché who had met Adam in Halton. The lady leaned on the arm of Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan El Dala, and Adam Arethune stood still as a monolith, his eyes fixed upon her to the exclusion of the rest as she came forward with her well-known sweeping step, her familiar grace of carriage.

She was dressed in the height of Parisian fashion—in creamy, sheeny heavy satin trailing in richness at her heels. A soft cloud of feathers encircled her head and neck, catching and mingling with the masses of chestnut hair. Whichever way she turned the gleam of jewels and glistening things caught the light; and Adam's heart petrified — turned a dead lump in his breast, to send his pulses thudding back to life with a sullen, turgid shame, contempt, and rage.

His votive Madonna! his single beautiful sin! his expiation! here and thus! He had been preaching yonder a sermon, the gist of which was the doctrine of true reason. Yet, as the revived Mary Ivory came down those stairs, dressed in her glittering gear and leaning on that other man's arm, he knew that the God of true reason cannot hold his own while man is man and woman is woman—that the God of human nature is the God of Love, even as he was in those back times we would grow out of and away from. He is a jealous god now, as he was then, and he will have no idols before his shrine.

Set him up in an ark, ye wandering tribes! striving

through purgatory to the perfect, and carry him before your face; for while the earth flowers and the sun gives heat and light and blood is blood, the old god lives and reason takes a back seat, until the red rush and lust be turned to a sluggish ichor—the earth to an arid and tenuous satellite—and the fertilising sun to a mass of molten, innutrient metal.

Reason sits highest in the pantheon of life, with his head in high heaven; but Eros crouches at the foot of the throne, with his foot upon the world.

Like all exemplary Christians, Adam Arethune had made his Madonna a creature without guile—an immaculate conception!

If a controversialist had suggested this of the mother of that great peasant of whom he had been talking, he might have argued its untenability on natural grounds. He would have said that other Mary was a woman and not a monster, and yet at the back of his head he hugged the idea that his own Madonna was pure and spotless—a being without fleck or smirch—a monster—as unsatisfying an ideal as the other. He met the reality in satin, a living beauty—not a dank, dripping, ghastly memory haunting him out of a watery grave, but a living, glorious, smiling woman—a resurrection, leaning on the arm of another man! The immaculate conception! the creature without stain! the impeccable virgin! What houses of cards!—what towers of Babel we build for ourselves by allowing the reins to our Pegasus of dreams! and how he breaks his knees on the stony ground of fact and brings our loose-jointed and nebulous fabric about our ears to overwhelm us in perplexity and confusion! Oh dear! oh dear!

The impeccable virgin is a shameless imposition; and

Adam Arethune felt that this was true, and that as a man and a priest it was his duty to tell her so. He stood out and full in the line of this vision of sheen and sparkle as it descended the stairs—stood there like an angry missioner of mediæval time anathematising a high priestess of the cult of pleasure. And no missioner is so enthused with his subject—no denunciator so virile and to the point as the man who has been humbugged—made a fool of! That black and white garb which made him so picturesque, and which cut him off from his fellows and switched him to a chimera, was of this woman's fashioning. That cold ascetic face, with its hardened mouth and darkened eyes—keen, observant, but with no trace of their old blue light—was of her modelling. She had done it all, and he felt somehow, as he stood waiting for her, that the tables were turned, and that instead of his hand being guilty of her death, she had thrust him into the dismal quicksand of life's blunders.

At the foot of the staircase Ahmed saw him and stopped short, pulling up Mary with him. Then he dropped her hand and came forward quickly.

"Father Arethune?" he said sharply, interrogatively.

But Adam ignored him. As she stood in the hall of the hotel, he strode to her and spoke; and the husky hoarseness of his own voice might have startled him if he had thought to listen to it.

"Mary Ivory!" he said.

She looked at him, and a spasm of displeasure splashed across her face. Then she turned her eyes with a childish fear in them to Ahmed:

"What is it?" she said. "Take it away!"

She tried to move forward, but Adam caught her gloved hand, and in his intensity gripped it.

"Don't pretend, girl," he cried—"don't pretend you cannot recall. Mary, Mary Ivory, look at me! I am Adam Arethune—and—and—God! the years I've mourned you dead!"

"Mourned me dead! What does he mean? The man's mad! Take him away, and let us go! Don't glare at me like that. I don't know you. I never saw you before. I never want to see you again. Go away! ugly! ugly! ugly! Let go!"

His voice sank huskier and tenser, and he pulled her towards him.

"You cannot do it," he muttered: "you cannot forget. You shall not. Look at me, Mary! You cannot—you shall not. Ah me! what does it matter now? Go! go! go!"

He let her hand drop and fell back. He had remembered—remembered the habit he wore, the oaths he had taken, the door he had shut in his own face! Lightly he had flung her aside when that beautiful promise would have kept itself to his weal and welcome. Lightly she now flung him aside when he met her—the saint of his imagination—living, clothed, and human.

He had spurned the substance and had hugged the shadow to his heart. And his "sweet saint" sprang past him and caught at the arm of the Persian albino.

Adam had turned his back. He hoped they would go. He despised himself now for waiting—for answering the call of Adam Arethune instead of bowing his head to the rebuke of Father Arethune, O.S.D. It was foolish, inconsistent, and led nowhere. What right had a philosopher to vulnerable feeling? What right had a philosopher to the habit of a Dominican?

All seemed quiet. That wretched swish, swish, no

longer rustled along the carpet of the hotel floor. He heard them get into the carriage—heard it drive away; and the sound of its wheels crunching the gravel somehow made him feel sick, as if the splintered pebbles had sense, and could feel pain, like men whose hearts and lives are withering. He turned at last and found himself facing Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan El Dala—alone.

There was something in the Persian's eyes which annoyed, yet silenced him. Looking into that ghastly, haggard, drawn face, Adam knew that an explanation of the phenomenon of Mary Ivory's appearance and disappearance was necessary, and he waited without speaking for Ahmed to begin.

The Eastern smiled—a curious, comprehensive smile, which held compassion, pity, and a strange fear in its contraction.

"Was I not right?" he said quietly.

"When? Where?"

"You are coming through the fire; and the barriers are still high, thick, and stout to resist the flame of the right. Eight years ago I told you your fortune. Was it not a true one?"

Adam laughed harshly.

"My fortune is nil now, prince. I have squandered it or invested it, which you will. Can you give me an explanation of this resurrection on the part of a woman whom her companions have regarded as dead?"

"Yes, I can. We will speak better upstairs."

He led the way back into the room where Mary Ivory had danced an hour before, and Adam stood on the same spot—upright, stern, tall, and ascetic, as a monk should be.

The woman was not there, and he could remember,

and when he remembered he became passionless, cold, judicial.

The monastic system crushes human sympathies into sand. Sympathy! the foodstuff of the mind.

Ahmed, too, stood there where she had danced, much as, years ago, he had stood before Adam in the Crown Inn at Halton, with his native courtesy and grace unimpaired, and only the wasted, worn face marking the flight of time and the growth of a vicious habit.

"The saving of Mary is soon explained," he said. "You were an accident in my leaving Halton, if you recollect; but, as no doubt you have heard of my case—though it is no uncommon one in my country and with my people—you will not wish me to remind you how."

Adam nodded. He had heard of the case of Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan El Dala, who had been physician to the Shah—who, being accused of attempting to poison the son of the sun, had been sentenced to be bow-strung—who, miraculously escaping from this horrible death, had fled from Teheran. This much, Adam had known years ago, and he could well follow the career of the great Oriental, who, being hunted like a wild animal, had, in his extremity, found an asylum in the out-of-the-way town in the English northern pottery district—who, upon the confession and death of the concubine who had caused his disgrace, had been recalled to his country, rank, and honours—in time only to see the son of the sun follow the woman.

'After the death of his Majesty," said Ahmed, "I returned to England for a space. And, as my interest in Mary Ivory had never abated, I went back to Halton to see how things had sped with her. It was so I was instrumental in saving her life." He told Adam how,

and spoke in his even, fluent way, which was so very expressive. "We thought her dead, and the boy mourned exceedingly, but I have pulled the spirit back when it has travelled further into the darkness than it had then. I had few means, but they served, and my knowledge brought back that dearest soul—all—all—save in the best and most wanted way."

"What do you mean?"

"Mr Arethune, are you anything of a physiologist?"

"Very little."

"Ah, no, or you would be no priest. Priests do not study nature's ways, eh? And yet this morning's work should point you an exception—and sure, sure, you are so. Listen! In the brain of man is the carriage or receptacle of that great God of whom you tell us, which we all know, and which is the fundamental religion of the savage and the savant—the Mind. It is the smallest and apparently the most obscure muscle in the body, and it is only because nature takes such care in its placing and preserving, that we, who watch her ways that we may know and serve her, have studied the faculties of that tiny gland. It is the machine of the intellect, Mr Arethune—the cog of thought. If aught happens to hurt or kill that delicate thing, the synthetic capacity becomes the instinct of an intelligent lower animal—no more to be trusted, trained, or depended on than the advices of a dog, an ass, or an ape. Think of the number of people you have met and whom you know whose wisdom and foresight are no more to be trusted than the instincts of a dog, an ass, or an ape. Mr Arethune, you will find, as I have found, that the world abounds in folk who, with the exception of the gift of speech, are, mentally, as low in the cerebral scale as any

intelligent, domestic animal. They cannot, and will not, think. They repudiate your God, and they worship idols: sense things that they can see, touch, and play with. If you disbelieve me, wait until to-morrow, and your temerity will surely bring upon you an army of men who will show to you brains in no better state of progress than the brain of the dog, the ass, and the ape —creatures of instinct and habit alike."

Ahmed laughed—that low, ironical laugh—and went on:

"When I first saw Mary Ivory, it was her great superiority in this particular which attracted me. She was a potentiality. I need not remind you that I took her in hand and what I made of her. Who, looking upon her now, afflicted as she is, would guess she had been a pug-girl in the English potteries?"

"Afflicted as she is?" repeated Adam.

"Yes. When I brought Mary Ivory out of the shadow of the change which we call death, I brought back all but that medium of the great God—the power of thought. It is dead or paralysed, and that beautiful mind which I loved, and which attracted even you, is an instinct of an intelligent animal of the lower species. She cannot remember yesterday. She cannot anticipate to-morrow. She lives in the present. The past is an idle word—the future an empty one. She is pleased and angered like a child—without the child's progressional intelligence—without its power of acquiring, storing, excogitating. She cannot remember you—as you were. She cannot remember me—as I was. I have only one hope."

Adam's stern, inelastic, erect attitude bent beneath the shock contained in this last speech. He drew a deep

breath, as if he had been running, and put his hand up to his chest, where the strong emotions so suddenly resuscitated within the last half hour seemed to have knotted and frozen again into a dull sense of guiltiness.

He looked a question, and Ahmed, who had been thinking aloud, with his ashen eyes fixed straight before him, brought them slowly to the priest's face and answered the look.

"Yes. I have one frail hope. It is in Eliah Sedgrook —a—and—and—it may be—in you."

"In me?"

"Yes. Wait. When first I undertook the case of Mary Ivory and brought her away from England, I thought that small brain gland was destroyed. As time went on, I was encouraged to think it is only lying dormant, paralysed, and that the day may come when it will regain its normal condition, and I was strengthened in this by her behaviour to Eliah Sedgrook. There are times, Mr Arethune, when I am sure she is struggling to recollect his earlier associations with her. And she hates with a childish detestation all things that are dark, dirty, gloomy, or in any way recall her uncongenial and clay-plastered youth. At those times she loses her temper—becomes unmanageable—like the animal and the vapid, brainless man and woman—and I have to send Eliah Sedgrook away. Soh! to-day . . . I have never seen her treat a newcomer as she treated you, and I am positive that reminiscence of a trouble or a danger or a sorrow connected with you made her do it. Mary Ivory is my most interesting patient. Have you any objection to making me your confidant? What made Mary Ivory throw herself into the River Hale?"

The knot seemed to draw itself tighter, and Adam's

clenched fist struck at it as he straightened himself and spoke with the calmness that had revolved a thing over and over again and finally resolved it to one issue:

"My conscience and Horndyke's evidence assure me that I did."

"Then—there—was an understanding between you after I left Halton?"

"There was a *mis*understanding between us after you left Halton."

"What do you mean?"

"Mary Ivory loved me then better than I loved her. It is the curse of some men and women, too, that they are born with their faces turned to the clouds. They reject the real and true for the ideal and fanciful. It is only through the time workings of your great machine—the mind—that they come to know that the ideal hides itself in the real, and that the truth contains the visions of the brightest and most ambitious fancy. I fled Mary Ivory as a snare and a temptation. God! what must she be to me now that her sorrows should wrench and hurt me so?"

That strange fear caught the features of the Persian physician and fixed them momentarily in a spasm which passed as he drew his thin hand across his brow and smiled again.

"What is she but what woman should be to man? Adam Arethune, what think you of things when a Christian priest catches wisdom and truth from the lips of an hereditary Muslim? What would you make of yourself in that skewing and distortion of nature of which you are the embodiment?—you, who are so blessed in nature's gifts?" He paused, moistened his dry lips with his tongue, and leant heavily on the chair

back before him. "You would defy and deride a power for whose possession I would consent to be the most poverty-stricken of mortals—a power which is not mine, and in whose lack I suffer torments only to be assuaged by sleep, forgetfulness, oblivion! You would make yourself a living hell and your manhood a mockery—for what? For a vain illusion of the impotent and the old. I would give my soul to win from Mary Ivory what you lightly flung away as worthless. I would give my hopes to be capable of worshipping her with my body as I do with my brain—and you—you—you—those beauties of mind and form which should have been yours as a help, an asset, a completion—these gifts and co-operators you flung into the Hale for me to pick up—broken, lost. Why was it, Adam Arethune? Was it because you wanted to gain heaven by the murder of one of its guides? or was it because she was a peasant—a slave—a worker? And yet I, whose lineage can touch that of kings, could have loved that woman who carried the clay, while you, who worked in iron, spurned her as a thing beneath you."

"Stop there!" cried Adam hoarsely. "It isn't true!"

And then he paused, for the stern dictator of right and wrong—the balance of thought which in these past eight years he had cultivated—gave him the lie even in his justification. Was it not true? Was it not that servitor of the imagination—vanity—which had shown him to himself as a chosen and called being? Was it not vanity that set her up in the light of a temptation and which rejected her wholesome love as a snare, when his soul vibrated to its summons, for all he said? The thing was simple enough, weighed in those judicial scales, which, to his torment, he had brought out of his

character so carefully. He had spurned Mary Ivory because she had contradicted his estimate of himself. He had arranged his own life, and Mary Ivory had shown him that the arrangement was wrong, and his vanity had resented and had insisted on following the way it had set itself. Verily, vanity and self-glorification make the saint and the conqueror too!

And he felt now, after his husky blurt, that the waters of the Hale had better have thrown her up in the ghastly fashion his fancy had so often pictured, than that he should stand there before this albino self-convicted of her soul murder.

That beautiful mind which had won him lay dead or dormant, and he had slain or palsied it. Better kill the body than the soul! ay, much better! It would have wrenched and hurt him less to have known his dream true, than to see the real outcome of his doing.

Perhaps the Oriental saw what was passing in his mind from the haggard misery of his face—that the martyred Madonna had shattered and given place to an idiot woman! The lofty inscrutability which marks the face of the searcher for divine truth had broken and collapsed into the pitiful disenchantment of the seeker who stumbles on the solid earth of reality. He was no missionary. He was no guide to mark the upward way for struggling humanity. He was no penitent working out the moral murder lying on his conscience. He was a soul slayer! And as his bright, dry eyes looked across the room of that Parisian hotel into those ashen features catching his, he saw the hand of death upon their owner—the indelible mark of the drug suicide; and the ghastly future fronted him. When this man was dead, what would become of her? And when Ahmed crossed

the room and laid a quivering hand upon his arm, the question rose unspoken to his silent lips.

He gently and sorrowfully displaced the hand and spoke, again in that husky tone so foreign to his usually clear, incisive speech:

"You cannot know the truth of it. You cannot see into my mind—and—and—hers is lost. Poor girl! poor girl! Let me go! The trouble which this morning's speech will surely bring me is a gnat bite to this. I must go and be alone with it."

He moved across the floor, then stopped and turned to Ahmed.

"I would like to assure you, her protector and saviour, of one thing. When she threw herself, or fell into the Hale, she was—as you left her. There was no reason for it, save her unrequited love for an unworthy object. Another thing: you will look upon it as a piece of impertinence for me to thank you for your goodness to her; but I do it all the same."

Ahmed bent his head, neither resenting nor accepting this courtesy, and not attempting to stay his visitor, who left the hotel feeling like a western cave-dweller who, passing his life underground, comes suddenly to the surface to find a bedizened corpse between himself and the sun.

CHAPTER XII

AT the end of the following week Father Arethune found himself in the position of an anarchist who has slain a king. In fact, the position was more desperate, more exaggerated; for the revolutionary who slays a king is not so hunted and bayed as the reformer who attacks a convention.

The air about this Dominican neologist teemed with the words "retract!" "recant!" The banquet after the Sunday's discourse had been conducted in dead silence. It might have been uproarious enough for all Adam Arethune knew or cared. The following day the prior sent for him, and he found himself in the presence of both this superior and the General of his order, who had been summoned by telegraph.

"Father Arethune," began the General sternly, "you have committed a grave offence."

Adam Arethune's hardened mouth hardened more, and he answered with his thoughts on his life:

"I know I have."

The General was mollified.

"I am glad to find that God has so soon touched you with repentance. Oh, my son! and we expected so much from you!—to know we have cherished a serpent in the bosom of our order, who could spit at our holy religion such heresy—such blind materialism!"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Adam, with blunt lack of ceremony.

"What am I talking about? You tell me you know you have committed a grievous sin, and then ask me what I am talking about?"

"Yes. I don't know what you mean by 'heresy—blind materialism.' My sin is my own, and its atonement must be my life's work."

The General looked sour.

"Indeed, it will take a life's labour perhaps to obliterate the fatal impression you made on Sunday. The church was crowded—the largest church in Paris!"

"Oh, you are talking about my sermon."

"And what else should bring me here, Father Arethune?"

"I am sorry to have been the cause to you of an especial journey, Father General. The sermon was the outcome of much reflection, and if it brought comment and appreciation, I am glad. It is not often that the truth is so soon or so easily grasped."

"The truth?"

The exclamation had the whole artillery of his sacerdotal system concentrated in it.

"I firmly believe what I enounced."

"Then you are a heretic, an agnostic, a free thinker!"

"I may be all these, Father General, and yet right."

The General was baffled. There was something about Father Arethune which subdued him in spite of himself. How should he know that it was an idiot woman whose future Adam was beginning to think more his duty than the oaths he had taken to this organisation of wasted men?

He was silenced. He could say nothing. He didn't

know what to say. A monastic brother who was Adam Arethune's intellectual inferior would have been easy enough to deal with. A little bullying tyranny, a little show of grief, a display of power and condign punishment for penance, a piacular offering in solitude and an open refutation of his views, would have been the course adopted. But with this whalebone, reserved, thinking creature these things were impossible.

The General tried to bring his practised arts of authority to bear upon the cold, steely-eyed man, but he stammered as he spoke:

"Th—this is—insubordination, Father Arethune!—revolt! There can be no greater crime!"

"There is greater crime in silence, Father General."

"Oh, you are deranged. I must talk to you seriously, and you must find your imperilled soul in solitude and retreat."

So the preacher whose doctrines were causing the Parisians to neglect their more frivolous occupations and talk about him, whose tongue had mined the crusts of bigotry and myth, and whose co-operation was now being sought by those who have the advancement of mankind in their minds, was shut up in a monastic cell to listen to the childish exhortations of a big child in a white gown—to be punished for his recalcitrance by the rest of the children, who resented with a puerile and unreasoning anger the ascent of one of their properties up out of their crude and unnatural sodality.

At the end of ten days the rumour went forth that Father Adam Arethune was to be expelled from the order of the Dominicans for heresy—the crime for which there is no expiation.

Cloud Creatures

Adam's views of things had brought him a friend—the President of one of Paris's many learned societies, an erudite and studious chemist, who, having been ostracised from his kindred and kind for the same reasons which now threatened the monk, had repaid a contemptuous world by discovering for it some of nature's most cherished secrets: thus, late in life, and after many years of lonely speculation, winning an appreciation and sympathy which should be the immediate meed of the revelation of the mind. One of those things which should be—but isn't!

M. Clovis Lavalle, contrary to his custom, had sought Father Arethune, and, foreseeing the inevitable end of the Dominican's courage, had offered him his friendship and an asylum in need. The French scientist was not surprised therefore when, on Thursday, the tenth day after that strange and revolutionary sermon, the monk was announced to him.

He had a hawk's nose and eyes—this clever Frenchman—but he had a kindly smile round them. He smiled at Adam:

"So! you have come!"

"Yes, I want you to do me a favour."

"And that is——?"

"Get me out of this habit and into civilised clothing. I am not going to wait to be kicked out, Lavalle. I am going!"

"Yes, I thought so—that it would be so. You have nothing?"

"Not a rap! not a rag! If you will give me pen, ink, and paper I will write to my brother; and if, meantime, you can oblige me, I shall be glad. By the way, I have another friend in Paris beside yourself—unless he has

left. He is staying at the Hotel ——. Can your servant see for me if he is still there?"

"Certainly. I will send him at once, and get you clothes and writing materials."

In an hour Adam Arethune was dressed much as he had dressed when he kissed Mary Ivory at her cottage gate in Halton, and he looked at himself in Clovis Lavalle's mirror with a grim interest in the ravages and improvements which the circumstances of the past eight years had worked in his face and figure.

For there were improvements, apart from the scorings of thought, sorrow, and self-analysis which lined the eyes and mouth—eyes far-seeing, reflective, puzzling, lacking all their old blue brilliance and animal beauty—the eyes of the mind, not the attractions of the body. The mouth and jaw hardened, firmer, squarer—the mouth of a man who has climbed out of the slough of personal vanity by the ropes of sorrow and suffering, who, finding a God, articulates him in silence, until he can cry "cognosco!"

A big travelling coat completed the equipment, and Adam stood prepared to depart for England, when M. Lavalle's messenger returned from the hotel, bringing on his heels the dark-faced Persian gentleman—the Khan Mikayl El Gol.

"Mr Arethune, I have a message for you," he said.

"Yes?"

"His Highness left Paris three days ago, the sherzade travelling with him. His Highness was much disturbed by the action of the monastic authorities, for I think he wanted your help in some matter. He left me in Paris to give to you, from him, a request."

"Ay, and that is?"

"That if you have any interest in the subject of your conversation on the Sunday afternoon when he had the pleasure of seeing you, you will follow it to Pera, and go with me, and I had his orders to start directly I had seen you."

Adam smiled at one thing in this man's speech. Fancy this Persian gentleman calling Mary Ivory—the poor pug-girl of Halton-on-the-Heights—a sherzade or princess! And yet nobody would think of disputing her right to such a title, while anybody might well imagine many princesses—pug-girls.

To Pera! He had not thought of it. He had meant to follow their movements, to watch over this woman whom he had ruined in worse fashion than if he had merely got her with child. He had meant never to let her go out of his ken or touch—but at once—to Pera! Why should Ahmed want him to go to Pera?

Once more he stood facing a gateway of life—alone. There was no casuistical Ganersh to meet the shadowy truths dawning in his uneducated mind with the fanciful refutations of the enthusiastic proselytiser. Those truths were now no longer shadowy, but concrete and grounded by close cogitation and unbiassed criticism—the divinity of nature, the sublimity of her soul, love—the need of a right adjustment of man and woman, their interdependence, interaction, mental and physical.

He looked out of Lavalle's window on to the hive of Paris, and knew that if it had been London, Vienna, or New York, the thing would have been the same. Those jostling crowds would be the time show of a blunder—a blunder beginning in that organism which he had cast from him—a blunder living in the recognised position of man to woman and woman to man. He looked forth

at the throng of gaily-dressed women filling those boulevards, and he saw there the dry rot of civilisation and progress. What were they? What could be their future?

He looked forth at the throngs of fashionable men following and eyeing those women with looks which turned him sick, and he saw in them the dry rot of physical health and mental life. What were they? What could be their future?

He looked out of the window and saw beneath him a poor man and woman—the woman heavily in the family way, staggering under a sack containing coke, while the man lounged beside her with his hands in his pockets. Jacques was too dignified to carry coke. They were peasants, yet the same order served—the selfish egotism of man, the oppression and stunting of woman. He was a bladder of vanity, vice, and folly. She was a beast of burden. What were they? What could be their future?

Where was his duty? Where did it lie? How should he shape it?

He looked again through those stern grey eyes and faced what lay beyond through their uncompromising and dissecting clarity. He heard what folks would call him—how they would take his conduct. Renegade! apostate! traitor! unfrocked priest!—ugly terms conveying all the prejudices of a narrow-minded generation. And after, when he pushed his views, driven by his sense of right and wrong, of what was fit, just, and true, how would they call him? Pagan! atheist! iconoclast!—vituperatives they had thrown at that Dutch Jew whose philosophy had shown him his own.

He left the Dominican order—the manufactory of

saints and soul traders—to follow a crack-brained woman to a land, forsooth! where women are shown up in the true colours in which the bulk of the world regards them—mere sensation traffickers, harlots, stimulants, serfs—to Constantinople.

He turned back from Clovis Lavalle's window and spoke to the Persian:

"When do you start?"

"I wait on Mr Arethune."

"There is nothing to keep me here. If you please, we will start to-night."

CHAPTER XIII

IN a tall, gloomy, ugly house in a narrow, dirty, mountainous street sloping to the water—and surely this is no guide, for all the houses or palaces are tall, gloomy, and ugly, and all the streets are narrow, dirty, hilly, and all slope to the water: yet, in one of them which stood apart in its own courtyard—a court whose bristling *cheveux de frise* looked aggressive enough, but, like the ferocious penthouse brows of an old man with a smiling mouth, were contradicted and demoralised by a thick and sturdy growth of evergreens and climbing plants up its walls and round about the spikes of iron themselves—in this mansion whose windows overlooked the beautiful Golden Horn and caught the sweet waters—away from the rowdyism and vice of Galata, the noise of Stamboul, the militarism of Scutari, and even the dirt and poverty which clings round the feet, so to speak, of the Palaces of Pera—away and outside from it all, as its owner was away and outside from his kind—dwelt His Highness Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan el Dala.

Constantinople is the city of secrets. When any untoward happening comes into his life, the bland and innocent Turk hurries to cover it up and put it away from him. This tendency to mystery has probably got him a character for duplicity and ferocity which he has never

deserved in his worst days. However that may be, the morning upon which Adam Arethune and his companion arrived in Pera, sundry silent groups of men standing about the courtyard and various pregnant glances, followed by a swift movement of indifference on the part of the hamals, porters, and lounging lazy folk who throng the way and press round the gate of a rich man in the East, made Mikayl to gather in his dark, expressionless eyes a gleam of apprehension for which Adam could not account. Nor did he try to; for from Paris to Stamboul he had kept counsel with his own thoughts, and, as closely wrapped in them as in the big travelling cloak provided for him by Lavalle, had kept himself apart from his companion—as apart as he felt he must be henceforth from the rest of the world. Disgraced, degraded, a man who had broken his word, who had perjured himself because he was convinced that what he had subscribed to in his ignorance was wrong and unfit—a snare and a delusion. His future solitude must be the price entailed by the infraction of this humanly erected principle of honour. And, as their carriage climbed up the knobbly, acclivitous principal street of Pera, Adam brought his casuistry to bear on the problem of honour—its genesis, its meaning, its weight—and he came to the conclusion it was much like morality, plastic, elastic, and reducible to habit and fashion, and, having arrived at the sarcastic conclusion that the infringement of habit and fashion is the mortal sin which cries to Heaven for vengeance, he noticed the shadowy fear in the face of the Khan Mikayl El Gol, and wondered at its cause.

The step of the slow and deliberate Oriental was quickened too, when they alighted from the carriage and entered the closely guarded gate—entered without

opposition from its silent and uncommunicative sentinels. Adam did not wonder, as an occidental stranger might, why Mikayl, if he had misgiving, forebore to question these men, for he had been in the East in the course of his business and knew its ways and the strong and stringent lines of demarcation, even mental and ethnic, which are set betwixt class and class. He followed Mikayl silently, therefore, and without surprise or self-comment.

Within the mansion pale faces and speechless tongues told of something out of order, and Adam was quite prepared to be shown into a small saloon and desired by his swarthy cicerone to wait awhile.

He guessed what had happened, and wondered if there was a Providence after all, or was it the mystery of gravitation—interdependence—interaction—the cry of the soul—chance—circumstance—the fiat of God—what you will—which had brought him there?

Mikayl returned, and the strong face of Adam Arethune carried his news reflected in its cold fixture. If the men of the East were not racially philosophers, how could they mutter "kismet"?

"He hath left us," said the Persian briefly.

"I knew it," said the Englishman as briefly.

"Come!" Mikayl led the way. Up broad, handsome stairs, though silent, fatalist retainers, across a chamber hung with costly hangings and strewn with costly furniture, into another bare and small, high up and out of the way.

It was here they came upon the body of Prince Mirza Ahmed Khan El Dala—dead.

No need to ask the cause. That suicidal pipe lay slipping as usual through the flaccid fingers, and when he recalled the face of this good and accursed man as

he had seen it in Paris, Adam dare scarcely ask himself if this was accidental.

Things are dilatory yonder, it is true, but presently surgeons and attendants swarmed in the bare and lofty little room, and Adam drew Mikayl aside.

"Where is the sherzade?"

A gleam of something flashed across the dark face.

"She is in her own chamber, I expect. Mr Arethune, I wish that Allah had slain that woman before my lord and brother had seen her!"

Poor Mary Ivory!

"There are some men whom Allah hath crushed," went on Mikayl, "and he was such. Yet though he lay beneath the mill, he gave no sign of sorrow, but taught us all to linger on his wisdom. When she crossed his path—this pretty cat—this gliding, turning, green-eyed serpent thing—he sorrowed because he could not make this shallow dancing girl his houri. Go, find this foolish toy, Mr Arethune, and take her hence. She hath slain a great and good man."

This was the longest and most forcible speech which this Eastern diplomatist was ever known to address to a European. Adam's eyes followed the direction of his finger, as he pointed to the door on its conclusion, and they fell on Eliah Sedgrook.

The half-witted cripple looked from one to the other in fear. His face was more vacant than ever, and his hands dangled in terror. Adam went to him and laid his strong grip on his shoulder.

"Eliah, where is she?"

Eliah turned without a word, and piloted Adam to another room, gorgeous and perfume laden. Here he left him, jumping through the unglazed window into a

garden beyond, which supplied the room with the fresh odours of its flowers.

Adam stood, strangely incongruous to the furniture of the place in his dark, unpicturesque dress, and with the inflexible, uncompromising manner thrust upon his old plaint grace by the circumstances and events of his life during the past eight years.

The fine silken hangings falling softly before the window opening were presently thrust aside, and the tall figure of Mary Ivory obscured the sun.

As she stood there on the top of the two steps, rising out of the room into the garden, Adam thought of the first time he had seen her, and contrasted the bright, intelligent girl in her squalid, foul environment with the woman who stood looking at him. She was dressed in a clinging gown of yellow silk, and round her throat and arms were pearls, and in her hair a yellow rose. At sight she was an ideal of beauty, yet out of this ideal a pang of lack struck the heart of the looker when he caught the hard, metallic glisten of the insensate green eyes.

She came down into the room with a frown on her face.

"What do you want?"

"I have come for you."

"For me? you? What's that for? Have they taken it away?"

"Taken what away?"

"It—it—it! Pah! I hate dead things! Tell them to take it out of the house at once. The birds won't sing while it's there. What's your name?—I forget."

"Adam."

"What a horrid name! Come here!"

He went to her, and she pointed out of the window

over the gardens on to the hills beyond Pera, and swept her finger so that it covered the vista of Stamboul and the Asian hills.

"I hate this place!" she said in her quick detached way, and stabbing at some distant objects with her fingers. "There's one—two—three—four—dozens of them! They're everywhere. You can't go down a street but you see their nasty cypresses. I hate cypresses—whispering, sighing things!"

"What are one—two—three—dozens?"

"Graveyards. These people are ghouls. They live among the dead, and they hate dancing, singing, everything pretty. Constantinople is the vilest place on the earth—except—except——"

She stopped and looked at him.

"Except what, Mary?"

"I—can't—remember," she drawled, "Adam—Adam—*Arethune*!" and she burst out laughing, and twisted her graceful figure into the pose of a danseuse, while he started and stared at her, for his surname must have been an effort of memory.

He went to her and touched her hand with his finger. She shook it off.

"Go away!" she said petulantly.

"But, Mary, I am come to take you from this place you dislike—this city of graves and cypresses. Will you come?"

"Where are you going to take me?"

"To England."

"England—England—England! Pooh! it's all dark and ugly in England. Will you take Eliah Sedgrook too?"

"Yes."

"I wish you wouldn't. Why can't he stay here with Mikayl or somebody? Why should he always haunt me like a hideous, crook-backed shadow? Shall we go now?"

"As soon as you can. Have you a maid?"

"Yes."

"Has she travelled with you?"

"Yes—yes—yes, I think so. She's always there when I want her, of course. Yes—yes—yes. I'll go and get dressed and go away from here. It's ugly here and—and——"

She swept up to him, and, taking him by the shoulders, stared into his eyes. It was a long and ardent scrutiny, but she seemed to take no note of the time. Her mouth worked and her brows puckered, and something plainly struggled painfully to assert itself. The dead man's words came back to Adam:

"I was encouraged to think it is only lying dormant—paralysed, and that the day may come when it will regain its normal condition."

She left the hiatus of her speech unfilled and let go his shoulders with a long shuddering sigh that was almost a moan. Then, she left the room so suddenly that he started to find her gone.

Part the Third: Earth Creatures

CHAPTER I

FOR years Sir James Arethune kept the wolf from Joan Arethune's door. She was enabled to leave the dingy Chelsea tenement and live in a pretty suburban house not far from the Crystal Palace. And for all those years—five of them—Edward Arethune pursued the life of a conventional Christian who seeks to shine amidst his fellows as a devotee, and asked no questions. One thing troubled him, and, finally, with masculine logic, he churned it into a wrong, a grievance, and a moral crime on the part of his wife. She refused to have any more children. They were living on James Arethune's charity, and in her way of looking at things a further extension of her family would have been injustice and improvidence. In vain did Edward Arethune bring authority of various sorts to bear upon this matter. Joan was obdurate. No man who is too indolent to earn the money to keep his children has any right to get them. No amount of prayer-books, rosaries, and religious observances and impedimenta generally will wipe out of his life his duty to those he has undertaken to cherish—his duty of self-abnegation, self-command, self-suppression, when needful, and self-control—duties taught him by the

beasts and birds and nature herself—trusts imposed upon him by the weakness and reliance of that poor woman from whose path he has made oath to clear the sorrows where he can, and by those young lives which can flourish only through strict and judicious conservatism and sagacious care.

But Edward Arethune was a man who had been in the habit of pandering to his appetites all his life, and it made no difference to his egotism that, like the Puritans of old, whom he much resembled in all but their bravery, that he preceded his self-pampering by an elaborate grace. With that convenient obliviousness which was blind to James's help, he would, before its advent, eat and drink what meat and liquor lay on the table before him, and never pause to ask if his three little boys were hungry, nor indeed notice their wistful little faces until the meal was over, recommending them then in his mild, high-pitched voice to run and get some bread and butter, never stopping to ask if there was any to get, nor thinking for a moment that little mouths love to munch titbits as well as older jaws. So long as the children were out of his way when he didn't want their society, it was well. Occasionally he would pet them as he would pet a cat or dog. But if one had suggested duty or responsibility in connection with his children, he would have stared out of his bland blue eyes and would have replied sweetly that "he trusted all that to the God who gave them," and if the hearer were a practical observant creature, he or she must have felt inclined to box the ears of Edward Arethune in sheer defence of the almighty wisdom and eternal will of which man should be the viceroy and co-operator.

Joan and he lived apart then, and Edward felt as if his butcher had refused to supply him with meat because he declined to pay his bill. It would have been wrong in the butcher. It was wrong in Joan. What right had she to stand in the way of the divine intentions as they were manifested in the lusts of this pious believer? What right had she to thwart him? She was his wife. He had bought, and never paid for her. He had her, so to speak, on moral credit, and he felt aggrieved and injured when the lessor quashed a bargain to which the trustee had never kept.

Still, life in the other animal senses was easier, and the house at Anerley was pleasanter than the lodging at Chelsea. The bills were paid, and Edward was in great feather at the neighbouring church and much sought by the clergy. He was head or member of all its sodalities and societies, and he could shelve with impunity and put off or object to all applications for his professional services. There was always something wrong with these applications. They were never good enough to consider. As time went on, nobody wrote to him on architectural matters, and people concluded that Mr Arethune had retired from business and wondered where he got his money from.

About seven years after Joan Arethune had left Chelsea and settled at Anerley, the redoubtable Mrs Privilege, having, after much finesse in tactics, caught the duke's son with the shady record for her only daughter, gave up the lease of her house in London, and took a surburban dwelling not far from Joan's quiet little villa.

Mrs Privilege, whose immediate maternal responsi-

bility had been disposed of to such excellent advantage, feeling, with the fervour of universal altruism, that the affairs of her neighbours in general were her occupation, and that the affairs of Joan Arethune in particular were her duty, made up her charitable mind that the secret thoughts and specious actions of Mrs Edward Arethune wanted looking into.

Before this change of fortune — for which nobody could account save Cousin James — Mrs Privilege had been in the habit of playing Lady Bountiful and mentor *in perpetuo* to Mrs Edward, to her own very lively satisfaction, and she missed the opportunity for dictating and scolding which lay in those cast gowns and small doles. For six years after the intervention of Sir James Arethune's banker, Joan had limited their intercourse to letters, and at last Mrs Privilege, seeing no reason for things at a distance, made up her mind to view them closer and find out what they meant. So she took a house at Anerley, and to this house, in the course of time, came the Very Reverend Monsignor Horatio Ganersh on a visit, for his state of health was bad.

This was about the time that Adam first threw the gauntlet to convention and myth, and his views and opinions were exciting wide attention and remark; and Ganersh made no secret of his conviction that his own personal ills were due to his grief and worry at the revolt—the "rationalism" of his former friend.

"The free thought of one age is the common sense of the next," says Matthew Arnold. That may be and probably is, but the free thinker has a bad time of it in his own age with his led companions.

"I never liked either of those brothers," said Mrs

Privilege, seated in Joan's pretty drawing-room with the ecclesiastic one afternoon.

Edward Arethune groaned over the account given him by these two chosen souls, and said nothing.

"I don't like James Arethune," went on Mrs Privilege, "and Adam was the most conceited prig I ever encountered. And I don't think, Joan, that you ought to go to Lancaster Gate alone as you do, though Sir James is your husband's cousin."

Joan bit her lip. She knew that this old harpy must have spied upon her somehow. Edward was still groaning in spirit over the decadence of his monkish cousin, and if he heard what she said he gave no sign. There was a silence, and Joan's voice, when she spoke, seemed to pierce it:

"I never go to Lancaster Gate alone. Before the boys went to college one of them always went with me. Since Jimmie went away I have not been there. If I want to see James, I write to tell him and he comes here."

"Well, that doesn't look well either, for you to be on corresponding terms with an apostate's brother."

"An apostate! Oh, Mrs Privilege, don't call my dear old friend that!" cried Ganersh.

"I'm afraid that's what he will have to be called, monsignor," said Mrs Privilege, rising in state. "You know I am a straight-forward woman, and that I give their proper names to things and people."

And truly, like all women who mine in their neighbours' matters and are never happy until they have got by hook or by crook the gossip of their world under their own control, she believed she was a straight-forward, far-seeing woman, and in this instance she surely gave Adam

Arethune the epithet which became his; in her fat, well-dressed person representing her system of sociology and daubing him with the name much as the aborigines smear their human sacrifices with blood before they offer them a holocaust to the idols of their crude imaginings.

CHAPTER II

MRS PRIVILEGE, failing in her purpose by direct application to Mrs Edward Arethune, treasured up a hint which Joan had unintentionally given her. When the Christmas holidays came round, Mrs Privilege's handsome house was open to the young Arethunes—especially Jimmie—the youngest and most pliable, and gradually, by dint of artful strategy and apparently harmless cross questioning, she got at the secret she wished, or at least, approximately; for Jimmie himself could only give her enough information to make her sharp and always malevolent wits deduce a conclusion more compromising and immoral than the fact. Mrs Privilege, like all such good and pious women, didn't believe in the disinterestedness of man. Man was an animal, whose attainment of heaven would be slow and difficult—if he got there at all—a consummation of his evolution which Mrs Privilege took leave to doubt. There were one or two exceptions possibly to this rule of masculine selfishness, greed, and insincerity. She fully believed one to to be Edward Arethune. An absent-minded saint! thoroughly trusting and unworldly! who was being sadly taken in by that smooth-faced little slut of a wife, and his unpleasant, silent, unmannered cousin. She opined that it was her Christian duty to give the

Arethunes, certainly Joan, a lesson; so, on the Sunday following Jimmie's final communication (which the boy had most unconsciously and in open-hearted boyish admiration for his hero-cousin and godfather—Sir James —imparted), she cut the Arethunes dead when she met them.

Joan didn't care. She didn't even notice it. But Edward was much struck with this behaviour, and when Monday came and he was out alone and encountered Mrs Privilege, he asked its reason.

The mischief-maker cast down her eyes and looked confused, and then said it was best for them not to know each other.

"But why?" asked Edward.

"My position is against it," said the lady.

"Has this deplorable business of Adam's got anything to do with it?" asked Edward, for the buzz of gossip concerning Adam was tingling in his ears.

"N—no, not exactly. Oh no, I hope I am too charitable a woman for that. But—do you really mean to tell me that you don't know?"

"Know what?"

"Do you really mean to tell me that you don't know what people are saying about Joan?"

"Saying about Joan?" he repeated uneasily.

"Yes."

"I don't know," he went on, more uneasily.

He might have said he didn't wish to know. It was certainly true. But Mrs Privilege was inexorable.

"They are saying—but we are such old friends, Mr Arethune, and you are being so wickedly deceived—and so have I been," she added plaintively.

"How?"

"Of course you can refute it, and I can spread your refutation. Joan never would lend herself to such a thing. I am sure after all it is nothing but spite and gossip; but, you see, people naturally don't like secrets, and Joan, poor thing, is very secretive. I have frequently rebuked her for it. People are sure to find out. They make a point of it, and there are no detectives like our neighbours."

"What have they found out?"

"That Joan has an allowance from Sir James Arethune, and that you permit her to take it. It isn't true, is it? I may deny it when I hear it?"

"I have never heard of it."

Mrs Privilege stood frankly aghast. Had that boy been humbugging her?

"Your own son told me."

"You said the neighbours told you."

"N—no—I—I—didn't mean—yes, it is gossip—and I asked young James because it upset me so. You never heard of it."

"I know nothing about it."

He might have gone on to say that he neither knew nor cared—that so long as what he wanted was there to be had he asked no questions. Wherever Joan got her money from, it was always there—a tangible, bill-paying, comfort-procuring product. When they had had to depend on the doles of Mrs Privilege and people like her, even his hide, although utter selfishness had made it pachydermatous, had sometimes felt the indignity as well as the sparsity of the allowance.

Mrs Privilege opened her mouth and looked at him. Then, suddenly, a light broke on her. She was a mischievous woman, and she was keenly alive to the laws

of propriety. She turned on her heel, and left Edward Arethune standing in the middle of the road.

After this, society changed its front in a very marked manner to Mr and Mrs Edward Arethune, and their suburban residence became isolated and their association tabooed. Joan cared very little for this, for she made few friends; but Edward began to call himself a social martyr, who had been put into a false position by malevolent relatives. Joan thought he meant Adam, whose iconoclasm had now reached its zenith or zero in the Parisian sermon and its consequences.

But it was Easter, and the home-coming of her young son, James, undeceived her. In the same careless, boyish fashion in which he had given to Mrs Privilege the information she wanted, he now told his mother how the lady had questioned him, and how he had given it, and Joan was enlightened very completely anent the snubbing of the Anerley *élite*.

This made her thoughtful. Not that she cared for the behaviour of her neighbours, but she knew that the world is still savage and primitive on many of its moral points, and that its appreciation of women is still unjust and ungenerous. She had no respect for her husband. How could it possibly be? She was neither sensual nor trivial. She tried to look at things in their right relations, so, upon receiving Jimmie's confessions, she travelled thoughtfully to London and struck for Lancaster Gate.

CHAPTER III

THEY didn't meet often—James and his cousin Joan. People between whom there is the tacit understanding which would become peril if voiced, don't. She knew when she came that she would hurt him sadly, but it must be done. This thing had gone on too long.

He was standing in his favourite posture on the hearthrug.

"It is strange that you should come up to-day, Joan. I was going to write to ask if I might see you."

"Indeed! you don't want to write for permission, Jim, and you have given yourself the right to command me."

"I never exercise it," he said with his dry smile.

"No. I take the usual woman's licence and turn things round. I'm going to try and turn things round now, Jim."

"How's that?"

"I want you to transfer your—annual kindness—to your cousin Edward—and to let people know of it."

"Why?"

"Because—because—psha! Jim, you don't want me to explain. You are not a child."

He came slowly to her and took her hand.

"They've been huffing you."

"They've not been huffing me. But Mrs Privilege

got young Jimmie into her clutches last holidays, and he told her, and for months past we have been sent to Coventry."

"Miserable hag! and yet I suppose they're wide awake. Public opinion is always based on a fundamental truth. That is how the axiom arose, *vox populi vox Dei*!"

He was speaking to the fireplace. Then he turned to her.

"They are saying I'm in love with you?"

She looked at him.

"Well, well, I wish it was a calumny," he said thoughtfully, and without any evidence of passion.

"I wish it was," she observed quietly. "Will you make the transfer?"

He took the length of the room and back and then said:

"No, my dear. I'd rather not. I'll give Edward Arethune a last chance to earn his own living. The Borough Council wants a principal in the drawing office. I'll get it for him if he'll take it, and I'll put the money I've allowed you to the placing of the boys. You can't object to that!"

She shook her head. She could have no objection to such an arrangement, but she feared that Edward would not take the post. James shrugged his shoulders, and they parted with a tragedy of silence between them.

Contrary to expectation, Edward did take the post, and without much persuasion, and six weeks after Joan Arethune again stood in Sir James's library with a faltering tongue and a white face, and announced starkly that she had left her husband.

"He doesn't want me any longer," she said. "He is

not now dependent on me—and—and—I cannot endure it, Jim. I cannot explain. It has been so many years—and—I cannot—I cannot! His tongue is most insulting. He degrades me past all bearing. Oh, you know what I have endured ever since I was foolish enough to be persuaded into marrying him. I have come to you to know if you can find me a situation—as anything. If you can't, I must look for myself. But you know a good many people, and I know I can rely on your honour."

This was a sop; for James was a man, and there was a strange light in his eyes as he listened to her. From under his lowered lids he glanced at her firm little face and tight-drawn mouth and knew that expostulation would be out of the question—from him most unfit. He saw a back cast there of a wistful entreaty, and, not for the first time in his life, James thought of her before himself, and spoke with his hands in his pockets, his eyes turned towards the fireplace, and with his usual cool deliberation.

"You are quite decided upon this move?"

"Quite."

He laughed a short, sardonic laugh.

"I can scarcely blame you—knowing what I know—but it's risky, Joan."

"It's better."

"You think so. What about the boys?"

"They are all away, as you know, and perhaps I'll see my way clearer presently. Meantime, I want something to do. He—he—told me to go. He said that I was no use to him, and that he hated to see my white puling face about him. You see, this has been a thing of years' growth, James. I knew that when he got, by hook or

by crook, something to make him independent of me, he would treat me like this. And I say it's better that I should go."

James pulled his moustache.

"That's only temper, my dear."

"Perhaps, but still it's better that I should go."

James was thoughtful, and his eyes wandered from her face to the fireplace—from the fireplace to the window—from the window to the table, where they fell on an open letter.

He laughed again.

"The very thing! Perhaps it would be best for you to teach Edward Arethune your worth by its absence. He's the incarnation of selfishness, and it'll do him good to have to shift for himself a bit. Look here, Joan."

He picked the letter from the table.

"This is from a lady who has taken a house in the north of England. She has just arrived from Constantinople. She has been living abroad for years, and she wants another lady to live with her as housekeeper and companion. It's a decent screw, and the only objection I see to it is that it will be jolly quiet and—and—you may occasionally knock up against Adam. Have you any prejudice against Adam?"

"I have the greatest interest in Adam. But, Jim, what has this lady to do with Adam?"

"He knew her years ago, and he brought her over and she commissioned him to get this house for her. It's a ramshackle old grange near the northern pottery country. She lived up there when she was a girl."

"Is she an elderly person?"

"N—no, I think she's quite young. Let me see—she was eighteen when—yes, she's six-and-twenty, that's

all. But, the fact is, she's a trifle odd. She had a bad accident eight years ago, and it destroyed her memory. She's all right, but she can't remember from one day to another."

"How sad!"

"Well, it may have its advantages. Otherwise, I believe she's a charming and accomplished woman."

"Is Adam in England?"

"Yes."

"Is he—has he——?"

"Given up the Church? I don't know. I don't know what he will do. You know they kicked him out?"

"I heard that he had been expelled the order, and that he had been cited."

"Yes, his case is on the Roman carpet. He talked common sense. Common sense is a cardinal sin to all dogmatists. I cannot tell you whether he will appear upon the citation. It would be just like him to defy it and them. I wish Adam didn't keep things so much to himself and was not so pig-headed. If I had only known—if I had only known——! There! the thing's done. Of course the rationalists, whose ranks are thickening every day, flutter round him like moths round a newly-lit candle; but I don't know what he will—— Will you go to his friend?"

Joan was thoughtful, reminiscent.

"James, do you remember telling me an episode in Adam's life, shortly after he entered the monastic novitiate?"

"Yes."

"Is—has—this—lady anything to do with this development in Adam?" asked Joan with feminine perspicacity.

James looked in the fireplace again, and sighed.

"I don't know, my dear. I believe that woman is the only expression of the Godhead we have, inasmuch as everything is possible to her, and she is the source of good and evil. Will you go?"

"Yes, I'll go."

CHAPTER IV

ADAM ARETHUNE, late of the order of St Dominic, thoughtfully paced the floor of a room in a London hotel.

He was speaking as he strode—speaking to a man seated in an armchair, leaning towards him with a flushed and anxious face, and a manner betokening much perturbation of spirit.

The man was Ganersh.

Adam showed neither anxiety in his features nor disorder in his attitude. He paced with a measured, equal step, and he spoke as if he were thinking aloud.

"It is inevitable!" he said. "It *was* inevitable! There is no longer place in the advanced human mind for legend. We have outgrown it, Ganersh. I am, with many others, a milestone on the road of the future."

"But," gasped Ganersh, "your theories are rank materialism!"

"Why should we go up in balloons to the clouds to find solid ground? In the matter of nature we find the secrets of the mind of infinity—for does not the mind of infinity so permeate and interact upon the matter of nature that it becomes the same thing. What do you mean by nature—matter—materialism? As if

the process of the universe was not the operation of the laws of nature."

"Directed by God," observed Ganersh.

"The interactionary law of intellectual operation—the informing soul of matter—yes."

"But, Arethune, you cannot preach this incomprehensible creed to the average man. It would stun—be dangerous to him."

"Because it is sensible, and he is a worshipper of idols, a pagan, however much of a church-trotter he may be. No, I know that, Ganersh, and so, I have decided."

"But—not to quit us! You will obey the Holy Father. Go to Rome in answer to his summons. Give your reasons for your conduct. Oh, believe me, they will be received with respectful attention and toleration. We teachers of humanity want such men as you—and let the authorities of the Sacred College decide your future."

Adam walked the length of the room again and came back. Then he said:

"I am cited to appear before the consistory sitting on the 29th of June. I am strong in my sense of right, Ganersh, and if I am alive—I will be there."

Ganersh heaved a sigh of relief and rose, repeating:

"Yes, yes, we want such men as you, Arethune. We want brains, brains, brains."

"You want God Almighty to sit upon your seven hills, Ganersh. Yes. But remember the eternal law is progressive, and in our human harness gropes on and on through the darkness and gloom until it reaches the portal of the real, where it sloughs the harness and stands in the light. Good-bye! Think what you will of me. I feel that, like all protagonists, I stand very much alone. Good-bye! Good-bye!"

Ganersh left him after a conference extending over half the day, and Adam resumed his patrol.

He had changed his dress. It no longer savoured of the clerical. He wore a loose lounge suit of dark serge which became him well, and showed his well-knit, lissome figure to advantage. His hair was well arranged, his face clean shaven, save upon the upper lip, where a thick growth of hair was gradually softening the time and thought lines scored in the cheeks. The dandified fastidiousness of the younger Adam Arethune had sobered—through much mortification in such matters—into a precision and flawlessness which impressed the beholder with a sense of the thoroughness and strength of the man and his opinions, and left no room for an impression of vanity.

Little things go a long way towards indexing a man's character. His personal appearance is a sure guide to his way of doing things.

The door handle turned again and another man entered—James.

Adam looked up, and nodded as if he had been expecting him.

"You got my note?" said James. "You were not surprised?"

"No. I wonder it didn't happen years ago."

"She'll come at once. Have you heard if the place is ready?"

"I saw the lawyers, and completed the purchase within a week of my return. It took a couple of days to make it habitable. I bought it as it stood—purposely."

"Why?"

"I want nothing altered—nothing changed. If I could,

I would put the time-clock of Halton-on-the-Heights back eight years."

"When does this lady go?"

"Miss Ivory and her maid—an Armenian—go north this afternoon."

"And you?"

"I am going with her. She is far too erratic to trust alone."

James drummed his fingers on the table.

"Adam!"

"Well?"

"Are you going to stay at Ellenstone?"

"In the neighbourhood."

James drummed louder and quicker.

"Adam!"

"Well?"

"I wish you were not so close."

"Why do you think me close?"

James Arethune paused in his drumming, and said slowly, at a tangent, and as if he had forgotten his aspiration:

"What do you call this lady? What is her name?"

"Ivory."

"Ivory? Where have I heard——? Adam"—he looked up—"that was the name of the woman whom Horndyke told me drowned herself in the Hale on your account. I remember the name—Mary Ivory."

"Yes, that is so. This is the woman."

"Adam! Then the story was a fabrication—a lie of Horndyke's?"

"No. The story was true enough. She threw herself into the Hale, and she was rescued half drowned. The better part of her has been half drowned ever since."

He stood still and looked out of the window, and so told James what the Persian physician had told him, going on:

"After the death of Prince Mirza Ahmed—or Emmett the mystery, which you will—his aide-de-camp and friend, the Khan Mikayl, handed me a letter. In this letter Ahmed, anticipating his own death—a pretty sure and swift consummation to his habit of opium—and my severance from the Dominican order—possibly from the priesthood—confides Mary Ivory to my care as my first duty, and gives me hints for her cure. The first of these hints is in Ellenstone Grange. This pertains to her case. My duty to her, which I fully recognise, took me to my solicitors yesterday, and I have made my will in her favour. If anything happens to me, she will be above want, and I have provided, by the purchase of an annuity and a life home in an institution for such like near Liverpool, for her poor half-witted attendant, Eliah Sedgrook, who, since the prince's death, has been less sane than before. His condition requires fresh scenes—fresh faces—fresh associations. Hers—old ones. Now, you cannot complain of my closeness."

It was James's turn to take patrol.

"I wish—I do wish—that you had made me your confidant more fully eight years ago. That fool Ganersh!"

"I don't think we are quite responsible for these things," said Adam quietly. "They come to us out of the past. They await us in the future. They are the logic of life. We can't really help what we do, for we must work in with the laws of our being."

"What are you going to do?"

"Follow the letter of my dead friend—for he was a

friend—and resuscitate, if possible, what my folly and heartlessness tended to destroy. I must do it, James. I must try to cure her. If you had known her then, as a clay-carrier, with a beautiful vigilant mind, and could see her now—a fine lady, with the callous, cruel, heedless sense gratifications of many other fine ladies—you would well understand the hell of remorse and reproach she makes me endure. This state is theirs by education and heredity. It is hers through me. I must cure her."

"And then?"

Adam shrugged his shoulders.

James rose.

"Will it be the cult of Artemis?—or Reason as a goddess?—or the church which worships the mother of God, and repudiates the mother of man?—or—or—just Mary Ivory in her immediate expression of woman?"

Adam turned his grave grey eyes on to his brother, and said quietly:

"Can you arrange for Joan Arethune to arrive at Ellenstone to-morrow?"

CHAPTER V

THE village of Ellenstone stood, to use an expression of the inhabitants, a crow's flight from Halton, and a few miles' journey from one of our most important northern manufacturing towns. It was to this town that Joan Arethune travelled, and at its station Adam met her.

"It is good of you to come, Joan," he said.

She had not seen him for eight years—more. She had not seen much of him in old times. His opinion of his cousin Edward as a self-righteous squaretoes was not by any means secretly expressed. But when he met Joan they were always good friends. She was not prepared to find such a change in him—to find the lively, irritable, impulsive young fellow of her memory developed into this quiet, guarded, taciturn man, whose face, which she remembered so mobile and bright, seemed to have refrigerated into the fixed lines of cold resolve and to be capable of no display of passion.

She thought him improved, however, and the still small voice which whispers true things through the world's clamours, suggested that the improvement lay mainly in his increased likeness to his brother James.

She grasped his hand.

"I am glad to see you again, Adam."

"And I you."

He had a carriage waiting, and he told her, as they drove along, as much as he cared to of the case which she was undertaking. He did not touch upon the previous life of Mary Ivory in the neighbourhood or his association with her. He kept his information strictly upon her affliction.

"I think there is a change coming," he said, "since she arrived in England—since she travelled with me to London. She is quieter and seems to be trying to think. She hardly ever dances now, and takes no delight in noise and bustle. Her cry used to be all for excitement, change, rush; and if she could not get it she would work herself into the most ungovernable pitch of fury. Is it not strange, Joan, that a tiny gland makes a heroine or an idiot, and that its destruction can turn the one into the other? The only thing you have to do is to let Miss Ivory go her own way. I think—I am sure—that the paralysed muscle is recovering, reasserting itself, and that she will remember by and by."

He did not tell Joan that he was causing this—that his constant presence and attendance on her seemed to be dragging the soul back into Mary Ivory's body—but it was so. She was capricious and fanciful in her treatment of him, but her very caprice and fancy were objective, and no longer the void anger of the thoughtless, unreflecting creature.

He helped Joan to alight at the door of Ellenstone Grange. The old house still looked forlorn and desolate. It was purposely done, that its condition should be as nearly as possible what it had always been within her recollection. It was still open to the country, and no attempt had been made to mend its broken fencing or

to revive its exterior. Inside, such hurried improvements as could be made in a couple of days had been made in its resources. These were merely directed to cleaning and dusting and so forth; and now, as Joan entered, two stout wenches from the neighbouring manufacturing town (not Halton) were busy polishing and scrubbing to remove the traces of decay and mildew which falls on uninhabited houses.

Adam took her straight to a room giving from its windows the finest and most comprehensive view of the country, for the Grange sat on an eminence and took in a sweep of England only bordered by the distant blue line of mountains.

Mary Ivory was in this room, and her Armenian maid, Adina, stood opposite to her.

Mary turned to Adam upon his entrance. Her face was flushed and her eyes looked angry.

"You speak to her!" she commanded him imperatively.

He turned to the Armenian.

"What is the matter?"

Adina explained that she had been telling her mistress that she could not stay in this quiet, unpleasing place, and as she was no stranger to London, and as a Turkish lady who was returning to Stamboul from England had offered to take her back with her, she wished to go; and "madame" was annoyed.

She was a black-eyed lass, with a trim, well-kept figure, a free step, and a roving glance. She had done what she could, she said, in bringing madame up to the north, and she wished to return.

Adam turned to Mary.

"You had better let her go," he said.

She looked up and across at the maid.

"You hear? You had better go, when you like."

Adina elected to go as soon as possible, so as not to miss her Turkish lady. She was used to English ways and travelling, and she would be glad if madame would give her the means of meeting both—in fact, her money due.

And here Adam remarked a curious thing.

In old days the younger Mary Ivory had been a very exact accountant. Poor thing! it was necessary. Since this terrible accident she had entirely lost the faculty for numeration. Money to her was as water. She threw it about without count or check, or ignored its value altogether. Ahmed, in his careful way, had arranged these things for her. Adam, since their reunion, had paid and disbursed.

Now, she was standing with her open purse in her hand, trying to count the coins in it.

Adam went up to her.

"Let me do that," he said.

"No. I can. I must. One, two, three—let me see! Adina, what do I owe you?"

The woman said, and Mary tossed the contents of her purse into her palm, and tried to tell it laboriously, like a child in an infant school.

"One, two, three, four, five, six—no, no, go away, you —I can—I will—do it! Adina, here! Six pounds and —one, two, three, four, five—five shillings. There's something else. What is it?" She put up her purse and took her head in her two hands. "What is it? What is it?" She looked from Adam to Joan. "Oh, I know—a receipt. Make her give you a receipt for the money. It's—it's—the right thing!"

She turned away and leant out of the open window.

Something seemed to stifle him. This was her most remarkable attempt at forethought, foresight, calculation! Choppy and disconnected as it was, he could see the mind machinery moving, as a set of motionless wheels working in a circular sweep, slowly and cumbrously and by spasms and starts, set the one into the other, the sweep into smooth, even, and gradually quickening revolution; so, altering and driving the whole mechanism, operating upon and influencing its surroundings to an untold and inconceivable measure.

Adina signed the receipt and disappeared, quitting Mary Ivory's life—the last memory of an episode.

Adam touched her arm as it lay over the window sill.

"This is my cousin—Joan Arethune," he said.

She looked back into the room and straightened herself up out of her lolling posture.

"I have come to stay with you, dear," said Joan in her pretty way, holding out her hand.

Mary Ivory took the hand and looked at Joan fixedly, half frowning. Then she deliberately took the big pin out of Joan's hat and threw the hat on the table and looked at her again. Then she tapped her cheek and lightly ran her finger through Joan's soft brown hair.

"You're a pretty woman," she said. "What did you say your name was? Eve? No, no, no. You're not Eve—although he's Adam. But it's Arethune?"

"My name is Joan Arethune."

She said it over two or three times and let her go, turning to him with a queer, fretful, wistful glance which now always caught him.

"Are you going to stay with me too?"

"I am going to stay in the neighbourhood," he said.

"Until when?"

"Until—until—you can count further than six," he smiled.

She flashed a gleam of her green eyes at Joan and swept up to him and caught his hand, bringing her face close to, almost on a level with, his.

Adam!"

Mary!"

"I can count—I can count—eighteen—and—and—twenty-five. Can you?"

She fell back, looked at him, threw up her hand, and laughed—a reckless, fierce jingle of a laugh—and left the room in her sudden, odd way, and they heard her crooning, in a low sweet contralto, the words and tune of a music-hall song which had been seething in the London streets before she came away.

She was remembering. Yes, surely, surely, Mary Ivory was remembering.

CHAPTER VI

THE lapse of eight years had made a difference in Keziah Gathergold. Looking thirty at twenty, she now looked forty within sight of thirty; for the cinereous air of Halton loves not youth and freshness. Perhaps that is why girls marry there at fifteen and sixteen, and are grandmothers at six-and-thirty, the pottery baking kilns forcing them into premature maturity, much as the sun does in solar climes. The results are disastrous, but the fact is so.

William Gathergold had left Halton some years before to better himself in the northern manufacturing town of Salford, where he married, and now, to use his sister's description of him, "stept out in Sofford shoon 'stead o' Oton clogs." That is to say, in his bettered condition he wore the regulation pair of boots in place of the local clogs.

William's wife had offered Kezie a home with them, but Keziah was independent and knew that an extension of the matrimonial dual union leads to unhappy consequences. She therefore kept on good terms with her sister-in-law at a distance, and opened a little general shop in one of the Halton streets, where she did very well as a vendor of small comestibles, and let her front parlour to reliable tenants.

To her vast astonishment there walked in one day the weary, bent figure of Thomas Anthony Horndyke—still overseer at the Longworthy pits. Keziah stared. Since the supposed death of Mary Ivory, Mr Horndyke had not been popular. There was no reason for this, but the people tacitly shunned him, and there were many who said he should have left the town, and there were many more who shook their heads and pursed their lips, and implied a great deal, saying nothing.

Still, he stayed at the pits and lived it down in his obstinate way, and, by and by, people almost forgot the cause in their pity for its result; for Mr Horndyke altered from day to day, and now stood, on the evening of the sixteenth of April and the Tuesday in Easter week, in Keziah Gathergold's little shop—a grizzled-haired, bowed, wrinkled man, aged to double—treble his years by brooding, and the suicidal thoughts which blackly lurk round the concentration of spite and revenge.

Keziah spoke to him brightly, and he cut her short.

"You've a room to let," he said.

"Yes—but——"

"I'll take it."

Keziah didn't bargain for this. She didn't want Thomas Anthony as a tenant. She ran over in her mind the excuses she could make. He saw through her—she was very transparent—and threw a month's hire on to the counter.

"There!" he said. "'Tis good gold, lass. Take it. Don't thou turn me adrift, Keziah Gathergold, like t'rest of 'em. Thou wert her friend and I can talk to thee about her."

Keziah put her apron to her face. When Thomas

Anthony dropped into the Halton vernacular and spoke of her, he got at the blind side of Keziah Gathergold, and, taking up the money, she let him her front parlour over the shop.

He had been a quiet tenant for nearly two months. In fact, it was the evening of Whit Monday when Keziah Gathergold returned to her shop from an outing in the country given to her Sunday-school class. Thomas Anthony cared nothing for bank holidays. All days were alike to him. He lived them through somehow, and they were done with, like his victuals. But that night Keziah felt sociable even to this gloomy misanthrope, and, besides, she had a piece of news; so when she opened the door and he lounged through the shop and made for the stairs, she stopped him.

"'Tis a chill night, Mr Horndyke, though it be June. Wilta tak' a soop t'warm thee hart?"

"No, lass, thank you. 'Twould take a many sups to warm *my* heart, I'm thinking."

"Ah, doan't say yon. Oi've gotten summat to tell thee."

"Thou hast a bonnie clack, Keziah Gathergold. Get on!"

"Dost know ould Ellenstone Grange?"

"What of it?"

"'Tis takken."

"Eh, surely! What of that?"

"Eh, mon! 'tis takken by a Muster Arethune!"

Thomas Anthony's head dropped, and he growled: "What of *that*?"

Keziah prodded him with a free forefinger in the arm.

"'Tis t'chap what bewitched poor Polly Ivory. I see

un! Un's changed, an's gotten a moostarche an's darker —but, bless ye, oi know un. Bess Keatly telled me theer's a leddy theer—Mrs Arethune. 'Tis his wife belike. Could tha' credit's cummin' back to this ploice? Eh, mon! but tha'rt a bear when's all's said."

For Thomas Anthony had thrown her hand away and slouched with an oath through the shop and up the stairs to his room, and she heard him pacing, pacing, from end to end of the tiny place, for over an hour, when the pacing ceased and there was silence.

It was a quarter to eleven, and Keziah Gathergold had put out her lights, and was going to bed after a tiring day, when Mr Horndyke appeared in her sitting-room and made her jump.

He came up close to her and said quietly:

"Are you sure, Keziah Gathergold?"

"Sure o' what?"

"Sure 'tis the same man?"

Keziah felt a lurking sense of having made a mistake in telling Horndyke anything about her discovery. But her vanity stood in the way of any expression of doubt or uncertainty; yet she answered shortly, and in an endeavour to drop the subject for good.

"Oi tell thee oi know un. Let un be, Muster Horndyke! 'Tis no affair o' thine."

Keziah, after this bold speech, marched off with a candle in her hand into her little kitchen to see that the back door was bolted. But Thomas Anthony followed.

"Leave the door on the latch. I'm going out."

"This time o' night?"

"Yes, I've a fancy for a stroll. Leave this door on the latch—or give me the key of the shop—that's safest."

Keziah stood still and stared at him. But there was

something in his face stemmed the objections bubbling to her lips. Her fingers fell from the bolt.

"How long wilt a be?"

"An hour belike."

"Coom in this way, then."

"Thank you. You're a good-hearted wench. Good night." And he opened the door, crossed the bit of a yard, opened the gate, closed it after him, and was gone on his stroll.

CHAPTER VII

ADAM ARETHUNE had taken up his quarters in a decent little cottage near Ellenstone Grange, in which the wife of a miner let her tidy parlour. It was here that the man whose power of thought fitted him to lead the mind of the world hid himself to watch the dawn of a reason his action had stunned. The earth stood still at Ellenstone. This planet revolved in its usual way outside Ellenstone and carried men's thoughts, wishes, ideas, and desires with it—round and round in the spiral of life's progress. But Adam ignored it, and May fled and June came, and the beckoning fingers of the members of the Vatican Council loomed out of the future, monishing him to obey their summons and answer for his temerity—his heinous misdemeanour—his terrible, blasphemous rationalism!

What place has reason in religion? Reason is a pirate—a wrecker. With one puff of fact she can destroy all the cockleshells of mysticism, myth, and legend. And think of the structure which can be and has been built on those nebulous foundations!—a structure which reason, if she be allowed to sail in unmolested, shows to be mirage, froth and foam to topple and dissolve at her solid, tangible touch.

And what a revolution in society would happen if

such undermining were allowed! What a number of men who now live on the credulity and superstition of their neighbours would have to earn their bread by the sweat of their brows—would have to pluck the light of their minds from under the bushel of jugglery smothering it and use it for the clearing of things! How many women whose path and duty in life have been subverted would have to doff the wimple, and, taking this phase of existence as a serious matter, make of themselves assets in its management—amazons in its van! Types of women: the mother and protectress, the wise guide and adviser! Yes, this is what she should be—the Goddess of Reason. No harlot capering and smirking from a tumbril on to an ignorant, vengeful mob! no suppressed animal creature—groping and nescient! no suffragist howling for what is not her due! no unsexed hoyden or poor toy either of pleasure or piety! but the eternal Mother of God.

And a man who thought and taught these things must answer for his crime. An anarchist of a dangerous pattern indeed, shaking the framework of society!—an ethical engineer uncovering its foundations and showing up the sewer! He had not been idle. He spent his time in writing; and as the sheets left his pen, he posted them, together with the gleanings of his mind which he had written during the past two years, to Lavalle in Paris.

After posting the last packet of manuscript, he muttered: "If anything happens to me my life will not have been an utter waste after all, for its essence lies there, and—who knows?—it may take root in some other brain to blossom and bear. The catholicity of mind is a problem. All thinkers—the hermit and the lecturer—

arrive at the same conclusions—if they work things out for themselves. It only shows that we are bacteria of the great brain and how little the process of life—living—really has to do with it. If I died to-morrow, somebody would think my thoughts and speak my words. The I of me would live in somebody else. And so it is. This is the philosophy of immortality."

And he walked away from the post-office across the fields to Ellenstone.

He hardly knew why he made for the Grange. It was late—after eleven at night—and he knew that the Grange would be quiet as the grave at this time. But it was a fine night, and he wanted a walk, and besides, he had heard from Joan that Mary Ivory was restless and often took lonely rambles at godless hours. This was a dangerous practice, to Adam's mind, and it might be as well perhaps for Mary to have a shadow who was able and willing to assist her in case of emergency.

The hands of the clock had turned the half-hour and stood towards midnight when the black mass of the Grange loomed up before him. He came upon it by a narrow lane, thorn-hedged and lonely. This lane led by a wicket into an avenue of ancient elms, and at this wicket he stopped to look at the gleam of the moonlight spires between the branches.

While he stood watching the pale, ghastly shine playing such fantastic tricks with the trees, he became aware that someone was running towards him—someone who was an uncommonly good sprint too, for he caught no sound of footfall or laboured breathing, but the runner flew down the avenue, blocking the moon gleams—on—on—towards the gate, like a breeze. He knew her—the old-time Atalanta of the potteries! He stepped into the

largest, brightest patch of light to attract her attention as she came down—tall—tall—like a ghost indeed—ethereal—mysterious! She wore a white gown covered by a long black cloak, and white shoes which scarcely seemed to tip the ground as she came on right to the moon splash where he stood, one hand holding up the trained skirt of her dress, the other held high above her—bare and shining in the nebulous light—with some gold glittering things upon it. Something gold shimmered and sparkled in her hair too, pins and combs, piling its bronze in a heap on her head. She came up to him, and the cloak—unfastened and loose—fell from her shoulders as she stopped and, letting go her train, stood before him, panting at the sight of him, white, anxious, with her great green eyes dilated into—what—what—what? So beautiful! So gracious! So—— Adam caught her two hands and, speechless, with a bulb of some immensity choking him, gazed at her—the parted lips, the fluttering breath, the worried line between the straight brows—little outposts of emotion which stood before the brain. The old Mary Ivory! Some new yet familiar thing had come into the eyes! Some new yet familiar catch had come into the breath! Some new, yet familiar pucker caught the mobile forehead! He listened, straining for the new yet familiar tone that should come with the speech!

It came.

Clasping his hands tightly—tightly—she murmured with the old tremor, with the old sweet note:

"I was coming to you—all the way. Adam, you must leave Ellenstone. You are watched—you are threatened. I have seen a ghost."

"Whose, Mary?"

"Thomas—Anthony—Horndyke's."

She said the words slowly, as if she were remembering the man's name.

"Where have you seen him?"

"He looked in at the window of my room. I saw his face against the glass in the dark—like—like—the phantom of a wicked thing."

Plucking her hands from Adam's, she caught her head in them in her old way.

"Ghosts! ghosts! Is not the world full of them? Am I real? Are you? What am I—a poor pottery wench—a pug-girl—doing in this gown—in this house—here—here—here? Why are you so—standing there—so changed—yet so much the same? Adam, have I been ill?"

He drew her to him. "You have been very ill."

"Oh, I remember it all! The water—the water—the Hale—and then, this house—and Ahmed and Eliah—then always Ahmed and Eliah—and never you. Backwards and forwards to Paris and the city of the tombs and cypresses, and never, never you. What brought you back? Had you not forgotten poor Mary Ivory after all?"

"I could not forget Mary Ivory. Tell me, what took you to the Hale?"

Her frightened looks and gestures returned.

"Oh, the fog! I remember!—that terrible man! Adam, he will kill you. His face looks as it looked then and when he threatened. It has not changed. Leave Ellenstone. My love! my love! leave Ellenstone. Put the wide land between yourself and Thomas Anthony Horndyke."

My love! My love!

What did he care for Thomas Anthony Horndyke? and what did he hear but that? and what did it show him? The long years wasted! The long years to come! The tribulation and contemplation of the cell where nature had defied his efforts to get beyond and above her—the omnipotent!—where this woman had thrilled through every prayer and invocation sent to a heaven where she must be goddess and ruler—his control and destiny! What was the fantasy of the imagination to the solid fact of the love that lashed him—the love that vented its revenge upon him now for his suppression of it in past time? Heaven—hell—God—devil! What did they mean but the state of the real content and its thwarting? What did the battle of this life mean but the rush for that state of content? And where people were happy, they had found it! and wise—wise—and most wise few—had taken their heaven when they found it, nor strained to see an impossible Canaan in the distant cloud packs.

He had brought her back. Through his few weeks' association with her he had seen that beautiful mind regaining its ascendancy little by little—and always through him. Slight suggestions which he would send out as grapplers she would catch to tow some stray derelict of memory of the past to the port of the present. He had re-made her. She was his Eve indeed. What the dead physician could not do, he had done. She looked at him with green eyes which remembered and loved him as always. She spoke to him in a voice that recalled the truth of the past and made it the truth of the present—the lode of the future. And he——?

Oh, the beckoning fingers of the council of redcaps! Oh, the mass, the pile, the Babel tower of legend—

thickened and slabbed into concrete law—which thrust him forth, a traitor, a Judas, an outcast, a pariah from their midst, if he broke their bonds and obeyed the pulse of his blood—the cry of his heart—and touched this woman's lips with his there under the moonshine. He was a monk!—a celibate on oath!—a creature to whom the love of woman was a snare, a vile temptation! He had done it himself! He had chosen this part and thrust her saving grace from him! What would he have been had he married Mary Ivory and got her with children—living the conventional life of the conventional, respectable citizen? Adam Arethune, the engineer. No hunted man flying to St Dominic's cloak as a shelter from a drowned woman. No synthesist in the solitude —no thinker—reasoner—Spinozist. No theologian—no philosopher. Oh, so respectable! Oh, so commonplace! Not appreciating *her*, the mother of his children —not appreciating himself, the undeveloped brain. Trial and struggle, battle and contradiction are the polishes of the mind. Let us cry down the humdrum life of social and mental mediocrity. It is a detestable, uneventful, destructive rule.

All this those two words showed him.

My love! my love!

He stood upon the threshold. With one swift look over his shoulder at the past, he crossed it with the shibboleth of her dead friend on his lips: "Kismet."

"Sweetheart, do you think I would leave Ellenstone, if it were peopled with murderers, now you have come back to me—now I have found you again?"

Her breath came to him in quick gasps.

"Why didn't you take me with you, Adam—then? Why did you leave me here? Oh, why did you leave

me to fall into the Hale that dreary, dreary day my father died?"

He drew her close and bent his head until his eyes were hidden on her shoulder, and spoke in a stormy whisper as he felt her arms encircling him.

"Don't ask me why I left you. I was a self-sufficient, self-righteous blind fool; and yet"—he raised his head, caught one of her hands—the left—and laid it against his cheek—"I don't know that I was such a fool either. I have been through so much—all alone; and we clear things wonderfully when we can see them in the open—when the mind—heading for straight from our birth—is unimpeded by men and sentiment. You don't understand, dearest love. It doesn't matter. I have suffered, Mary. I suffer now. Oh, my sweet! I suffer now in my love for you, which is the agony of the unattainable—in your love for me, which is my crown of thorns."

She looked at him in amazement. She only half heard what he said. Her recovered reason was all bent on his safety from a man she dreaded, and what of her was not fearful for him was limply happy in the delicious contact of him—in the feel of his caresses and endearment. The agony of the unattainable! There was no agony to her, save in the proximity of Thomas Anthony Horndyke. As for unattainable, he knew she loved him, that her strengthening brain cuddled its old idea closer and deeper in its new power; he knew she would follow him whithersoever he led—to strange lands—amid alien peoples—to poverty, sickness, death—happy to live with him, happy to die with him. What more did he want? And what made it unattainable, and her love to him a crown of thorns?

She jumped at the most visible conclusion and wriggled out of his arms.

"Are you married?"

"Yes. To you—in heart—in soul—in mind," he laughed, and caught her back to him.

Yet the laugh had the note of a sob in it, and he gasped like a runner and looked into her eyes as they fixed his. Then he bent and covered her face with kisses—her hands, her neck, all of her he could see through the white gown. He was hungry and greedy, and she lay like a lifeless thing in his arms, and let him do what he would, until, gently raising her one arm, she pulled his head to her and caught his lips on her own, the trees seemed to grow black, the earth to evaporate, the moon and stars to efface themselves, and a tempest of passion swept them both up and away out of sight of all manner of considerations and consequences.

"I cannot—must not—let you go back to-night to Ellenstone. Come to the house. Oh, dear heart, don't kill me again with fear for you. There's safety in the light. Adam, you must stay with me."

"Mary, you don't know what you are asking me to do—to risk."

"Yes, I do; yes, I do. There's safety in the house to-night. There's death in the roadway. Adam, don't you think that a woman whose every fibre of her body throbs to a man's, as mine does to yours, knows when he is in danger? Whatever's the risk, I'll go back with you to Ellenstone, or you'll come with me to the Grange."

He flung up his head with a strange, low, inarticulate cry, like an animal under the whip. She didn't

know what she was doing. She didn't know what she was tempting him to do. Suppressed, strangled, held down, smothered by iron weights of reason, prejudice, and habit, all these years, what would those scorpions do when they reared their heads and rose, virile, unmanageable in their strength, at the call of this green-eyed resurrectionist?

"Come to the house! Come to me!"

His voice was raucous, and he shivered and pushed her away from him, holding on to the wicket with one hand and covering his eyes with the other, so that he might not see her sinuous, tempting grace.

"I daren't, Mary; I daren't!"

"Why daren't you?"

She sprang at him and pulled his hand down.

"Because I love you! Because—I—I—want you! Because—because—oh, you are a very Eve!"

"Yes, yes; I know. And you are my Adam. And—and—Adam and Eve misbehaved themselves and made the world interesting and exciting. Only think what a terribly stupid place it would have been if it had been left Paradise with nothing anywhere but trees and flowers and snakes! No men for women to love—no women for men to kiss. No music, no theatres, no pictures, no anything. Come to the house with me and tell me you love me there. Hark! it's one o'clock now. In four hours it will be light. You can go when it's light. Or—or if you won't come to the house, let me come back with you. Nobody will hurt me. I should frighten them in my white dress; and remember my old work, and you'll know I'll be as good as a man in an emergency. What are you going to do?"

She wouldn't let him clutch the gate. She pulled

him back to her. She swept his cheek with her lips. "While you are with me you are safe," she said.

He laughed—a low, reckless laugh. He held her from him out in the moonshine, so that he could see her —take in her beauties—the tall, willowy figure with its Venus de Milo developments—the perfect face, mobile, sentient—and those wonderful eyes! She could not tell what citadel of Moral fell in that flash of time, though his eyes seemed to go all round and through her. She could not tell that for the second time he flung the gage of system to nature as he laughed that reckless little laugh again, and, winding his arm round her, moved up the avenue of elms.

CHAPTER VIII

ON the evening before the night on which Thomas Anthony Horndyke invaded the Grange on an expedition of discovery, and Mary Ivory saw him without his seeing her, Joan Arethune received a letter from James—a letter which sent her, quiet and cogitative, to her room, and kept Mary Ivory and herself apart.

"Edward came to me yesterday," said the letter, "blubbering like a child. He is lost without you. He will do anything to show his appreciation of you if you will return to him. Poor chap, he looks flabby and helpless, unkempt and untidy! He says he is ill. They put him in a damp bed and he has rheumatism in all his joints. He said in a childish way, 'Joan always saw that the sheets were aired.' In fact, your credentials with Edward are that you excel as a housekeeper—on next to nothing! and he cannot find a servant to take your place. What an estimate of you! But I don't think its uncommon. I have watched the men I know since you and I met, and I think the majority look upon their wives as servants or necessary evils, and they do without them if they can and do with them as little as they can. So that I suppose, although Edward Arethune doesn't shine as a paragon of all the domestic virtues when one analyses him—one isn't supposed to

analyse him, but to take him in the aggregate, as one of the majority. This being so, my dear, I leave it to you to think out what your duty is. For reasons which we need neither write nor speak, it is not for me to advise you. Only remember, Joan, that you gave your word to see him through, and that the man or woman who, having given his or her word to go through with a certain course of action, breaks it, is guilty of a fracture of the principle of Honour. And we have no other moral code in life, despite our thirty odd systems of religion. Therefore, I ask you, as your loving cousin and all-time friend, to think it over: to work it out in your clever, level little head, and let me know what you are going to do."

This letter was so like James Arethune, so straight, so true, so direct, so just like him, that Joan's first impulse was to thank God for James Arethune.

"I love you better and dearer than man ever loved woman, but I wouldn't have you belittle or belie your thorough nature even for me. If you go back to that stack of selfishness to whom a word binds you, from your sense of duty and right, I shall admire you all the more and shall love you none the less."

This is what the letter said between its lines, and Joan tucked it up and thought the thing out, as he told her to do.

All through the evening she thought. All through the night she lay awake, until, having gone to bed at half-past eleven, she got up at a quarter to one, and, putting on her dressing-gown, lit her light to read the letter again. The light was burning and the letter was drawn from its cover, when a noise below made Joan start. It was somebody talking in whispers. Underneath the room there was a passage with a door at the

end leading to the garden. Joan flung her window open and looked out. Outside this door stood Mary Ivory in her white dress covered by a black cloak, and—Adam.

Joan was delighted. She had half made up her mind to seek Adam in the morning and lay her case before him, on its immediate issue; for Adam could not be, in the nature of things, so much her confidant as James. Yet Adam was James's brother. He, too, was straight, direct, and purposeful. When he said a thing he meant it, and when he meant a thing he said it. Hadn't he got himself into trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities by saying things which sounded uncommonly like the truth? And if he thought them, hadn't he a right to say them?

Joan supposed he had found Mary Ivory wandering in Ellenstone and had brought her back. She closed the window softly, and, wrapping a shawl over her gown and thrusting her feet into her slippers, ran downstairs through the little garden passage and stood just inside the door as Mary Ivory pushed it inwards.

The slight figure enveloped in the fleecy shawl, with the face carrying in its refined features the stamp of patient endurance and trend for right, holding the candle high, might have stood for the figure of Prudence to him as Mary Ivory opened the door and he saw her there.

In fact, the appearance of Joan brought Adam to the full sense of what he had done—of what he was going to do. There seemed to be a wonderfully clarifying atmosphere about Joan Arethune, and, looking through that woman's common career—the wife of a man who was one of a majority—he saw his own, his past and his future, if he allowed himself to be driven by those passions which had brought him to that door. He looked at

Joan in a strange complexity, and Mary Ivory caught her round the shoulders.

"Mrs Arethune, can't Adam stay here to-night? He is followed and watched, and I am afraid for him."

Joan lowered the candle.

"Followed and watched!" she repeated.

"Miss Ivory thinks she has seen a man whom she has reason to dread. I welcome his apparition, for I think it has done more for her than all our arts. The paralysed brain gland about which the Persian doctor spoke so much is apparently recovered. She can remember everything, Joan. Don't you mark the alteration in her?"

Mary Ivory had gone forward into her room, and they were alone in the passage.

"I have remarked a change in her lately," Joan said. "She talks of and catechises me about things that are past."

"Does she talk of—catechise—you—about—me?" he faltered.

Joan stopped and looked at him sapiently. She knew exactly what he meant. She knew exactly what he felt —God help him! Through her perspicuity she caught in her heart at what he came there for. The returning reason of Mary Ivory involved a greater complication than the fiat of a dozen consistories. Man is man and woman is woman, and that is nature's religion, and Joan knew that the philosopher who is met by tyrannical opposition needs little change of coat to become an outlaw.

"She does talk of you," she said. "She has not asked me any questions about you. When she does, I shall refer her to you. I don't know what she has been, but,

in the light of your altered views, you'll understand me, Adam, when I say that I think woman is man's true confessor." She thought a moment, with her hand on his coat sleeve. She thought of the end of her letter, and went on: "I heard from James this evening. I wish you would read what he says to me."

She took her hand from his arm, and drew the letter from the pocket of her gown, looking at him in her grave way all the time. He answered the look from his steady, strong eyes—eyes telling of purpose, put off perhaps, but not abandoned; and took the letter in his strong, unflinching hand—a hand that would smite and spare neither his contemporaries nor the woman he loved in the driving.

He read James's letter, and she could see that he read the final paragraph twice:

"The man or woman who, having given his or her word to go through with a certain course of action, breaks it, is guilty of a fracture of the principle of honour; and we have no other moral code in life."

He gave the letter back, and pointed to the passage.

"Yes, Jim sings the popular song there. It's the topical ditty of ethics, Joan. But the question remains, What is the principle of honour? and to whom and to what do we owe its observance?—to ourselves or our neighbours? What are you going to do?"

"What shall I do?"

He leaned an elbow against the wall of the little passage, lounging with his cheek on the palm of his hand, and, with his other hand in his pocket, looked at her.

"Look here, Joan, I'm going to be very straight with you. You were inferentially straight with me a moment

ago. You'll forgive me, I'm sure, for what I am going to say. It'll show you that I'm in the know—and—it will pay you for—for—spoiling something. I'm not in love with you like Jim, and I've met your sort before. In spite of your gentle, sweet ways, you are one of the best little bullies in the universe. I'm sure you are. Now, do you know, my dear, one of the most smashing weapons which men and women carry is the power and courage to tell people what we think of them. You've no idea how folks climb down if you give them just ten minutes' chin music of wholesome truths. And that's the sort of physic that Edward Arethune occasionally wants. You're too patient with him, and he's too thick-headed to see that your silence means contempt for his foibles. Go back to him—yes. Marriage doesn't begin or end at the mere animal connection between the sexes. It's women's own fault that they are victimised, Joan. They either say or do too much or too little; and no stew is good without pepper. When you think a thing is wrong—say so. It's not the way to cure it to treat it with silent contempt. As for your relations with James, let be. Time will work that out for you. There's no other way. And, after all, time is the best crutch for the principle of honour to lean on. Mind, I'm only guessing at the relations between you; but if he has helped you in past time, let him do it, and don't repudiate him for the sake of convention. It's a pleasure to a man to help the woman he loves, and it's a grace in her to take it and defy convention. Convention may clack with her long tongue, but she neither gives you a crust when you are starving, nor a shilling towards your butcher's bill, and it's bad policy and false morality to curtsey to her. You can't depend on Edward Arethune, and he's

your husband. You can depend on James Arethune, and he's your friend. Things are as they are, Joan, and not as folk would make them. Therefore, let Jim help you. He's got it, and you haven't, and you're welcome. You have my opinion, my dear. You made a wise remark just now. I think woman is man's right confessor. Good night, my dear, good night. I want to speak to Mary Ivory; and I shall go when I've said what I want to say—and—and—like all our good intentions, it'll surely cool if it keeps. Good night, good night."

So he dismissed her, and went forward into Mary Ivory's room.

CHAPTER IX

THERE was once a man who walked out of his house one fine morning, and was hailed on the kerb by an acquaintance. A trivial circumstance! but it altered the whole course of the man's life; for the acquaintance told him of the sickness and difficulties of a friend, and, abandoning his first purpose, he hurried to the friend, and there met a woman. Behold! we have the nucleus of a romance to be worked out according to the taste and fancy of the sentimental. If the man had gone on his first road, things would have been different. If James Arethune had not written that letter of advice to Joan, which kept her awake and brought her downstairs in the small hours to speak to Adam Arethune, things would have been different too. Into what chasm of blind folly might not he and Mary Ivory have fallen, if the grave eyes of that woman, who had suffered so much from the egoism of man, had not sent those swirling senses back into the stronghold of reason and calculation? His encounter with her did not last five minutes, yet he left her with a very different purpose from the incentive which brought him there.

Joan Arethune was a sensible woman from her fixed idea of duty, and she did nothing without much casting about and premeditation. The great blunder of her life

had taught her this faculty of prescience. It was shutting the door when the steed was stolen, but the school of experience must be conducted in that superannuated stable, I'm thinking.

He went to Mary Ivory's door with a determination in his mind which had never been there before in connection with her: a determination grown and concrete in those five minutes—sown at Joan Arethune's hint—grown out of the experience of the last hour; a confession which he owed to her—a justification which he owed to himself.

Would her love bear the strain of it? He was sanguine. He thought so.

She had thrown off the black cloak, and was sitting huddled up on the corner of the sofa, with her face in her hands, and her elbows on her knees. She looked at him as he came and sat beside her.

"Mary, I want to tell you something."

"I know."

"Before I tell you what you know, there's something else."

"Something I don't know?"

"Yes. What I've been doing, where I've been, since you came to me in the Crown Hotel eight years ago—to show me my right way. Oh, Mary, I wish I'd taken it! I wish—I wish—I'd never let you leave me then!"

Mary nodded, and took her hands down from her face.

"You told me you were going for a religious life. I thought it was a fiction to get rid of me. Wasn't it?"

"No. I never remember telling a wilful lie in my lifetime. If the things I have said have been wrong, I

have always believed them when I said them. It was true."

"What made you change your mind?"

"I didn't."

"You tried it?"

"Yes."

"And left it?"

"No. I was ordained in Rome. Then I heard of your supposed death in the Hale, and they said—and I believed—it was through me, and I entered the Dominican monastery at Bologna. I became a missionary, but my thoughts and teachings are proclaimed heterodox, and the holy and primitive order of Dominic has sent me out stigmatised heresiarch. On the 29th of June—in a fortnight's time—I am to appear before the Council of the Sacred College to answer these things. There is not a doubt as to its issue, for the progressives in the Church overweigh the legendaries; but—but"—he suddenly flung himself at her feet—"Mary, I want none of their favours. I mind none of their bans. I want you—you—and only you."

She straightened up on the sofa, and let her hands drop from her face to either side, clutching at its chintz covering.

"Then it was not a dream?"

"What was not a dream?"

"I have a memory of music—myself dancing—of Ahmed—and of you in a white habit, upbraiding me, frightening me—coming, as it were, out of a mist in my head—the black November fog of the river that had stayed there when Ahmed fished the rest of me out. I thought I had dreamed it. Were you really there—a monk—a Dominican?"

"Yes, I was really there. It was that meeting brought me here, at your feet—at your mercy. Think, Mary! On the morning of that day you were a dead memory of the thing I loved—the phantom of a crime. At noon you had been brought to life. You were glorious, but the best of you was lost, and I knew I could find it." He caught the hands gripping the chintz and pulled her towards him by them. "I have. I have. You are my Mary Ivory once more, and the past eight years are dreams to both of us. Let us wake to the present, my sweet, and forget them in each other."

"Could we? Is it possible to get away from the bondage of an oath like that?—in the love of a woman! Eh, Adam? Could I teach you to forget when the world would be shouting you treason on every side? You—so thin-skinned and circumspect! Is it possible? Could it be?"

She sprang up, pulling her hands away and leaving him crouching there.

"Oh, why did you bring me back? Why could you not leave me dreaming? My God! my God! to bring me back to life for this! To find you and lose you! To find you—a corpse indeed—the ghost of an immolated life!"

He had not thought of her taking it this way. He had argued the thing out from his own convictions—all from his own side. He had forgotten that the beliefs of her childhood were her beliefs still—that her ideals were those he had hugged to himself eight years ago, before he had turned the searchlight of reason on them. Her God was the old God—the Pillar of Fire—the Cloud—the sort of transcendental Gas supposed to be capable of thought, feeling, human action and motive—

The Dream

[redacted]

"[redacted]"

"[redacted]"

"[redacted]"

"[redacted]"

"[redacted]"

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] [

"Yes. I was [illegible] me here, at your [illegible] On the morning [illegible] the thing I loved [illegible] you had been [illegible] the best of you [illegible] He caught [illegible] toward him [illegible] Mary I [illegible] dreams [illegible] sweet, and [illegible]

"Could [illegible] age of [illegible] Adam? [illegible] would be [illegible] so [illegible] it be?"

She [illegible] him [illegible]

"It was [illegible] not [illegible] me back [illegible] find you [illegible] life."

the *Thing*! How could he persuade her that this Thing was a permeating law—the logic of destiny? He had gone on to meet it; she was dreaming still—brought back to life—yes, but as fast asleep as her neighbours. He would have to destroy all that she and her forebears had held sacred and worship-worthy. And what could he put in its place? His love! Would it serve?

He rose slowly, with a dull sense of bankruptcy stealing round his heart. Out there in the avenue of elms he defied the Vatican consistory—certain of her love, of her support and help. He could always find a home for heart and brain in the lap of Mary Ivory, he thought. Could he? If he had told her that he had been living with another woman, she would have cried and squirmed, but she would have taken him back surely. If he had confessed to profligacy or outrage of any sort, she would have condoned and sugared it over. But—he was a priest, a monk! and she was a good Catholic. His caresses—his kisses—were sacrilege. She turned a woe-begone face to him. It required no speech to see into her mind. She would have gone any lengths almost with Adam Arethune—she was prepared to throw life and fate, heaven and earth in the balance of his love; but Father Arethune, missionary of the Order of St Dominic—with the Papal investigation and inquiry hanging round his neck—was as far removed from her as the planet Neptune. Her hands fluttered to her miserable face and she burst into a panic of sobs.

He stood and watched her—immobile—supine. He felt that the whole thing had been a blunder, and vaguely marvelled as he watched why it should have been so. What back cast of error in the eternal existence of that

mind that informed him should have procured this wretched skewing as its portion and lawing?

Her sobs died down by degrees and she looked at him.

"I wish I'd known," she said with quivering lips. "I have been shut up in a dungeon, you see, and the chinks of light that stole through told me nothing, and I cannot now disentangle them from dreams. All that has happened in the last eight years seems fused and blurred and like a dream—a jumble of light, music, silks, travelling, odd people, and Ahmed and Eliah Sedgrook—unconnected—fantastic. I can recall all that went before—well—clearly. I wish I couldn't! for you are there as I loved you—and—and—oh me! oh me! you are here as I love you still. But—Adam"—she rolled her handkerchief into a damp ball and clutched it tightly—"it would not do for you to do this. You would hate me by and by, and I should feel like a pagan. I—I—couldn't go to church on Sundays—for the sin would be too great. Let us look at it rationally." He laughed—a bitter, ironical laugh—on the word. She seemed so childish. Her arguments seemed puerile and tawdry from his present conception of the sum of life. And yet, eight years ago, he would have thought—would have said the same.

She waited for him to say something, with the cambric ball pressed to her lips, and her green eyes scintillating tears at him.

He spoke slowly, as if he were thinking what he said to himself.

"Yes.—I suppose you are right, from your point of view. I forgot. I have grown older—and—I have come to the conclusion that each man's own mind is the grammar of the Godhead. You don't understand. No,

you wouldn't. I should have to teach you my philosophy; and though I should love to have you for a pupil, the infant school of parable and myth may be the best for you, as it is for most folks. I—I—was—mistaken. It's all a mistake, Mary. The impression I made upon you at eighteen has strengthened, and cured your palsied reason at twenty-six. Remember all that went before you saw me. Remember it well—for there is much to do in the world for you if you will do it. There will be no sin in your taking my means to help you, and you will find them at your disposal. For the rest, and where I come in, let it be in your mind as incoherent and nebulous as the events of the past eight years. Good-bye."

Before she knew what had happened, he had gone and she was alone. He had neither touched nor approached her. He had gone out to meet the morning, bearing the corpse of hope in his breast—a machine for the murdered future.

She stood where he left her, with her handkerchief to her mouth, and the tales, creeds, and convictions of her childhood and youth rushed upon her. Was this thing demanded of her by that cruel Deity which shuts men and women up in unnatural, insensate seclusion and labels them "holy"?—men and women who forswear the sunshine and progress of life, and wither and die—waste this life to win a better? Is it the way to win a better? She cast herself down on the sofa where he had knelt to her.

Shall we smile or groan over the reality of our ideals—the reduction of the cult of the Beautiful? The pious Catholic worships the other Mary—extols her into the Queen of Heaven. Turn him back two thousand years,

and he meets her an ignorant peasant woman of the wilds of Galilee. Adam Arethune, whose fixed idea was the goddess-ship of this Mary, found her divinity in his head —and herself a clay-carrier of Halton-on-the-Heights.

And yet, the pebble in the earth is a common stone. When the lapidary takes it in hand, it becomes a diamond. The future pays, and this one little life is not enough to do the work in, look you.

He said he would have loved to teach her his philosophy. What was the philosophy that could give a man who had committed the sins laid to his charge the dignity and self-righteousness of his exit from her—of his feeling for her, now that the fever was over, and the cold light of reflection shone?

She got up from the sofa and remembered more. He had gone out, and the ways were lonely and the day not yet come, and his enemy—where was he?

Adam Arethune was in danger. Ellenstone or Halton were not safe to him with that man in them. Priest or apostate, whatever they styled him, she loved him to her sorrow; and, again snatching up her cloak, she followed him, out into the blackness of the time before the dawn.

CHAPTER X

IT is certain that, in the darkness which envelopes the world during those hours of inertia lying betwixt midnight and sunrise, all thought assumes unworthy and fantastic proportions. Good deeds are slept upon: forgotten in the brain rest of content. But bad counsel prevails. Wrongs grow out of the umbra of the earth's shadow—revengeful giants ready to pay. Then, bad intent is reckless and remorseless, and a small slight, a passing word, a careless look, little things that shrink into their own insignificance by the broad, analysing sun, loom big and ugly, nightmares of devilish deeds.

If a man has a grudge against another and lies awake in the small hours chewing its cud, into what a deadly crocodile of desire for revenge will grow the creeping lizard of inflicted hurt? And how much will the murderous monster crunch his heart on its cruel fangs, when he nurses and fosters it for years, after the fashion of such men as Thomas Anthony Horndyke? Unable to see things in their relations, unwilling to admit his own incompetence to fit the part he had wished to play, repudiating the notion that under no circumstances whatever, and if there had been no Adam Arethune in the case, would Mary Ivory have become his wife, he cherished and brooded over the wreckage of his life,

which he laid at Adam Arethune's feet. And it should trip him to his doom! And Thomas Anthony raised his face to the sky, and menaced his God with his clenched hand. For, despite his critics and his drawbacks, Ludwig Feuerbach is right: man shapes his God upon the clouds—a reflected image of himself, a Brocken shadow of his own doings.

So Thomas Anthony, on the top of a blasphemous invocation which he called a demand for justice, persuaded himself that if it were true Adam Arethune had returned to Halton, he had certainly coerced his own particular Brocken image into delivering his enemy into his hands.

The Grange looked dark and desolate in its night garment. And his prowling told him nothing, even though he got close up to the windows and could look into the lower rooms. Only in one did he find light and evidence of habitation and an upraised window blind. And even here the room itself was empty, and his morbid curiosity was pricked to a madness by the glimpse of something white which, flitting in at the darkness of the door, stood and vanished without giving its meaning to him. He was reckless and merciless. He felt like bashing in the window glass and calling to this man to come out and fight him. He slowly and laboriously, after his way, conned over his counts of injury—turned all the lizards into crocodiles, and let them loose to tear and rend him. If Adam Arethune was really in that house, he would wait about until he saw him—until—until—what? He didn't know. He didn't care. He wanted to see him again—to see how time had counted them both up and to whose advantage the product lay. He wanted to see him—no more. And he lounged about

with his hands in his pockets, lurking near the trees, and chewing—chewing—chewing the fodder of that misspent, mislived, misapplied life which he laid to Adam Arethune.

He kept near the front of the house, for he thought that by sun-up its owner would most likely be seen at one of its windows or doors.

It was curious how Horndyke had taken Keziah Gathergold's information with so little question, although he knew that Sir James Arethune's brother had entered a monastery, and he had not heard that he had left it—for such a case as Adam's at such a stage is local, and could not vibrate in the dull ears of Halton. But he knew that priests and monks do secede and marry, and she had said there was a woman at the Grange. And Thomas Anthony was willing to believe anything crooked of the man he hated.

"He was of no account then. He's of no account now. He'd stick at naught, be good for naught. I'll see him—I'll see him."

As time went on he questioned less that he was there. He felt sure he was there, and his dogged resolution was turgid to see him—and what then?

The hours moved, and he moved too from time to time, to what he considered a likelier place of vantage. In one of these passings an impediment caught his foot—a rusty iron staple, hidden and forgotten in the long grass. He cursed it and passed on. But presently he came back and picked it up. A nasty thing to hit a man with! He would see him—and what then? He lounged cautiously through the undergrowth, carrying the ugly loop with him. Some distant Halton clock chimed two, and Thomas Anthony threw himself on the grass,

resolved, after his narrow, obstinate fashion, to wait for the morning and the man.

Time travelled ponderously to somewhere about the half-hour, when a small slit of a door in the façade of the Grange opened, and someone came out and walked rapidly away.

It was Adam.

Things looked red to Horndyke, and for a second the world waltzed. He steadied it with an imprecation and lurched noiselessly after his prey.

If the world had not been more bouleversé to Adam Arethune himself than his appearance had turned it to the man who dogged him, Horndyke could not have gained upon him without his knowledge. For his ear was quick and his mind usually alert to passing things. But the current of his life was refracted. He had got his *congé*. The woman had betrayed — disappointed him! And she for whom he had thrown up and was willing to throw up position and prospects had rounded on him and told him he was a sinner and that her association with him would be a crime.

He was bitter on woman's perfidy and prejudice at that time. He was bitter upon that great law whose apostle, advocate, and expounder he had constituted himself—that great law whose inscrutable and impeccable workings had brought him there in that dark lane with a murderer at his back, and which had placed Mary Ivory in her room with her feet caught in the brambles of half-formed ideals and folklore.

All thinkers go his way. All believers go hers. It is the difference between the talents used and the talents buried, and the greater part of our little planet is a cemetery.

He bared his head, and, lifting his face to the sky, laughed with a bitter irony at his folly—at his single remaining wrecked faith—at his swamped life.

Was that great law of mental operation and right adjustment which he preached and knew, so stern and irrefragable in its workings that no miracle, no suspension of its expression, was possible? Is every action of our lives—is our life itself—the strict consequent of a cause?—the investment of the future? And must we suffer in the present for both?—paying and staking in this great casino of a world?

Yes, yes, yes. Even in abject despair man knows that. His tongue tells lies, but his heart knows. The knowledge that there can be no such thing as an abortion of that great law—a miracle—and that its process is justice and compensation, is his salve and consolation even to the end, and in spite of the rubbed-in fictions of creed.

It is not always Here, and yet it is always Now. Behold the paradox! Is it worth the working? Pooh! pooh! we live in a bauble-shop, and there are baubles to play with, and skulls and mummies to guard them! Let us crown them in tinsel and dress them in rags! They'll look like real men and women then.

What was it made the stars flash and drop out of the sky on to the earth? What made the sea rush over its bonds and surge down that quiet lane? What made the spray splash his face with that soft, hot splash, then stream and run? What made things darken and thicken? And who flung a blanket of blackness round him, so that he groped his way for a few steps, then turned and saw a hideous face, and a raised arm which he caught at with a cry? But the blanket was round

his feet and over his head, blinding him, shutting out the face and palsying his clutch, until the inert fingers loosened, and he fell, with the red spray besmearing and fouling his beauty, and the world shut up—shut up like the book of his life.

CHAPTER XI

GRIPPING the iron staple—so much more defaced by its ghastly defilement, with the blood and hair of its victim mingling with its rust and mildew—Thomas Anthony Horndyke looked down at the result of his loafing—his glut of revenge on the man who had won the woman who was not for him—the woman who had refused to marry him a score of times! His sodden brain held only one idea: that, if he had persisted, he would have got her in the end, and that this fop, this dandy, this toff came between them and settled her and ruined him. Now, *he* was settled, and the lumpy, obstinate, stolid consciousness of Thomas Anthony Horndyke admitted the debt paid. There lay the receipt in his hand!—that bloody, bestial loop of old iron. He grunted, and a vague sense of self-preservation bade him throw it away, and, lifting his hand, he flung it far into an adjacent field, where the poor little field-flowers shrank and withered under its nasty contact. Then, with a characteristic squaring of his wooden jaw and his habitual lurch, Thomas Anthony Horndyke turned on his heel and left his enemy, prone and terrible, in the roadway.

The instinct of self-preservation made him shamble along at a quicker rate than usual, and the after fears from crime sprang into being to prick him into action.

He must put the land betwixt himself and That—betwixt himself and Halton, with its tongues and pointing fingers —and its law. He must fly! Whither?

At the end of the lane he stopped, and his lowering eyes lifted to look up and down for a place of safe destination, if such could be for such. It was still dark. The sun would not be up for an hour and a half. No streak of light lifted the canopy of silence palling the slumbering earth. He cursed the stillness, which magnified his slightest footfall and made it a sound. And when a streak of light appeared, he cursed that, and stopped in the middle with the oath broken on his lips; for the streak of light moved—moved quickly, like a daub of white upon the darkness—coming swiftly down upon him.

It came closer: a woman walking at the rate and with the stride of a man—a woman in draperies that glimmered and flashed through the density—something that shimmered and gave out sparks here and there. What was it? Who was it? The assassin's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth and a damp mucus oozed through his skin. He knew that speed rate. He knew that step—that height—that sweep of movement. God! *what was it?*

It came on upon him—close upon him—down upon him; and he shrank—a babbling, gibbering, incoherent mass of fear and guilt—into the mire of the loaning.

Was there real truth in those children's tales? Were the old wives' stories of ghost-ward other than fuzz and foolery? Ugh! what if there were something besides the rough justice of the savage little mind—the eye for the eye—the life for the life? Did the dead actually reappear and menace? Were Adam Arethune and Mary

Ivory man and wife in life and death, and did she watch him in the spirit? Heaven and earth! what availed a blood-stained gate-staple against *this*?

She saw him. She gave a gasp, and in a stride stood over him and spoke:

"What have you done?"

And Thomas Anthony Horndyke howled and chattered—bestial—idiotic—with no semblance of man in his black heart.

She stood looking at him in amazement for a second's space. Then she remembered her supposed death and understood. The man was a coward. But what made him such an abject coward?

She sprang from him with a cry, and with a prophetic horror sped on to see, leaving him to crawl and shake in the hedge, until terror gave him fresh energy, and he gathered himself up and rushed away aimlessly, stricken down among the accursed—rushed wildly on—on—away from it—away from a phantom which had risen even while his sin was seething hot. On—on—to perdition—to the destiny of the presumptuous, stolid, brooding fool.

Fact and circumstance were shrivelled nothings to Mary Ivory as she flew down that gloomy way. A miserable foresight warned her, with the unswerving accuracy of our presentiments, what she should find there. And, skimming the ground faster and faster, she came upon it.

What did it all matter when she came upon it? This—that had kissed her and told her it loved her! This—that had lived under the haunting sway of her personality since they met yonder on the moss outside his murderer's hut! This—that had fought and striven with her influence—to yield to the forces of brain and heart

which back up the strength of woman against man to his subjugation—the forces which proclaim the everlasting truth that it is not good for man to live alone—forces which are divine because they are natural and right! This—that she had sent out to his death! What did it matter what he had been—or what he had done—or what barriers of oath or fiat lay betwixt them? She was more his murderer than the vermin which had scurried away from her at the top of the lane. She had sent him away. She had thrust him into the night of despair and death.

She made no sound. She uttered no cry. But, as she came upon this huddled thing, a change came over Mary Ivory, to bide with her for always. He pleaded his cause more there in that second of ghastliness than in a lifetime of health and beauty. She felt that he had left her in the flesh, and that the heart of her was stricken dead in his bloody shroud.

The trick of her old trade came upon her, and, stooping, as years ago she had stooped to those lumps of blue clay, she coiled her arms round him and lifted him, high, as she had lifted them, hugging him close with practised poise; and, carrying this that was left of her lover as many a day she had carried those hundredweights of earth to the moulders' bench, she staggered with the same old uncertain yet well-planted foot, back to the avenue of elms; and, goaded and driven by what she knew—knew—knew—she lost sight of the distance and felt no fatigue, for the load she bore was blasted life and love, and she laid it not down until she got to the Grange, where she bade them tend to it and bring assistance with a calmness and self-possession which seemed to them almost callous and cruel.

Brought down for the second time, Joan Arethune screamed, and Mary looked at her in surprise and displeasure. What was there to scream at? Adam Arethune was dead. One man had killed another. They are always doing it one way or the other. Why scream just because you have been talking to the dead man a little time before—because he has been kissing you and his caresses have been very welcome? She didn't scream, although that was her case. She knew he was dead, although they washed and bound up those ugly wounds and waited for the doctor to come and tell them so. He might lie on that bed some time yet, but he was dead—dead—dead.

And when the doctor came she waited and heard his astonishment, as they told him who had brought the body in, with a dull sense of apathy and distance—waited for his verdict as he stooped over the mangled mass she loved.

Oh me! oh me! How now?

He shook his head, and that hard, frozen thing lying heavy in her bosom throbbed not a fraction. She knew.

"I'm afraid it's no good," he said between her and Joan. "He is alive—but—I am afraid he will never regain consciousness. We must have a nurse, however, and it will be better to send for his friends."

Mary moved round and sat by the bedside.

"I'll nurse him," she said, speaking for the first time.

Joan, in her sorrow, started and looked at her, for the voice was metallic, hard, and utterly unlike Mary's.

"Can you?" said the doctor.

She bent her head.

"There, it hardly matters," he muttered; "it's too late to do anything. Mrs Arethune, can I speak to you?"

He went aside with Joan. But Joan could tell him nothing he did not know—for he lived in Ellenstone—and they were obliged to come back to Mary and ask her more. She sat there, quiet, and without emotion of any kind gave her story with judicial accuracy, suppressing only the relations between Adam and herself. Joan stared at her all the time with a kind of fear of this self-contained creature who had been *tête-montée*, and was now so possessed, creeping about her. The doctor obviously regarded her as extraordinary as he left her sitting by the bedside and went away to put the law in motion against the murderer and to telegraph for Sir James Arethune.

CHAPTER XII

YES, it lay on the bed upon which it had been placed, for many days—that battered lump of wreckage which had been Adam Arethune, with no soul of life in him—no breath that spoke of hope or light. And when it had lain there two days, the report came that the body of the man who had made it derelict had been fished out from the Halton Reservoir, into which he had either fallen or thrown himself.

But the end of Thomas Anthony Horndyke was as nothing to Mary Ivory. He had done his bit, and his exit was of no account. The strands of his life, of hers, and of that other's—of all she had known and moved with—lay together on that bed.

Within twelve hours of the doctor's telegram James Arethune arrived at Ellenstone, and with him came Horatio Ganersh. And beside Adam's death-bed they met the woman from whom Ganersh had drawn him.

She did not know it, nor did he; and James kept silence, for men like James do. Ganersh might have looked with suspicion upon the woman who shadowed the murdered man, and have put down the tragedy of Adam Arethune's life to that ever-true cause. But she kept always in the shadow, and he saw little of her until one day—the 28th of June—when she came to

him, and for the first time sought and spoke directly to him.

"Monsignor Ganersh."

"Miss Ivory."

She spoke so quietly that she took him by surprise.

"Father Arethune once told me there was friction between him and the Papal powers—that at the consistory to be held to-morrow he was to appear to vindicate his position. He told me that the Dominican Order had repulsed him for heretical teaching, and for this he was to be tried—to-morrow. I have been ill. My mind has been practically over-clouded, and I know nothing of the events of the life of a man who has been for years—the one man in the world to me. I would like to think with him now—follow him up. And when he goes presently, my soul shall catch and tangle his, so that he may not leave me all alone. Have you any written account of his thoughts and teaching?—that I may meet him—for he has gone on long before, and he must not leave me behind."

This speech cleared much to Ganersh, and if she had made it to the Ganersh of eight years—of one year—of a week ago, he would have refused to comply with the request contained in it. But there was a strangely compelling power about this tall, green-eyed, silent woman, of whom they told queer stories, and whose face and hair in these last days had aged and streaked beyond her years.

He fumbled and stammered, and finally drew forth a cloth-backed book.

"You'll find the epitome of my poor friend's opinions in the newspaper column preserved in this book. You are a Catholic?"

"Yes."

"And a clever woman, I should think. My poor friend and you would not be—as you are, if it was not so. Am I right in supposing that you were once employed in the potteries near here?"

"I was a clay-carrier."

How blind we are! and how dark the road before us, even with that which looks to our erring judgment like a searchlight!

"You and I must meet again, for I am in your debt. Yes, yes—my sin to you lies heavily on my soul. It is a belated justice to you that you should know him from his expounded thoughts; therefore take this and read his dogma, that the supremest union of all may be yours if it is so willed by the great mind he exhibited—the union of thought which the changes of life and death cannot touch or canker."

He went away. The book was a breviary. She sat down by the bed in her accustomed place and drew from its pages two columns of a newspaper. They contained, *verbatim*, that epoch-making sermon Adam Arethune had preached in Paris.

That evening she read it; and, while she watched during the nerveless small hours, she read it again. Far into the morning of the 29th of June those newspaper cuttings lay on her knee, and she caught at their meaning and followed the depth, height, and trend of its argument with the ardour of a loving disciple who strives to see the inner spirit of her master—to secure and hold it for ever.

She switched it to herself even through those glassy eyes, and by the living death upon his grey and beaten face. Her love, too, sprang, with woman's faculty of intuition, at the power within herself to move this mind

to such an evolution; and she vaguely and wonderingly rejoiced at the power, even while he lay there—hopeless—wrecked—impossible.

It had taken years for Adam himself to mould his own mind to the philosophy whose exposition lay in that sermon. It took Mary Ivory, with her woman's deductive brain, apt understanding, and her love, the time betwixt sunset and sunrise.

She rolled up the scroll of print. He would leave her, but she now knew what he meant—what he had done; ay, and what—more than himself—he had escaped. For what lot is harder than the lot of the reformer? Surely the iron staple was kinder than his critics had been or would be if he had lived to teach his truths.

The others had all gone, and she sat, with Ganersh's book upon her lap, looking far and deep into the task of a desolate life, seeing his work stretching, for her to carry on, into the gloomy corridors of the future.

She turned her wide, dry eyes to the bed.

His head was towards her, with the death ooze on his skin, and reason—knowledge in his dimming eyes. They dilated, and the raucous whisper crept to her:

"Mary!"

She was on her knees beside him, meeting what was coming as she was ready to meet all that should come.

"Adam! Adam! forgive me for sending you away. I did not know. Beloved, I did not know."

The thought that had grown in the lane—the last thought in his mind before he turned upon that brutal face—the thought that had held his brain when the cowardly blow was struck—came rattling from his lips with a last wan spasm of a smile:

The Threshold

"It is not always Here—and yet it is always Now. By and by, Mary—by and by."

The eyes glazed and turned upward. The jaw dropped on the last word, and his head fell back.

Mary Ivory rose, and her shivering breath caught the soul which fled from his parted lips, and Ganersh's breviary fell open on to the bed, with the newspaper cutting trailing across it.

THE END

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